

Publishing Policies and Family Strategies

Library of the Written Word

VOLUME 32

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Publishing Policies and Family Strategies

The Fortunes of a Dutch Publishing House
in the 18th and Early 19th Centuries

By

Arianne Baggerman



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2014

This book is published with the generous support of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO).

This book was originally published in the Dutch language under the title “Een lot uit de loterij: Het wel en wee van een uitgeversfamilie in de achttiende eeuw” (2000, Sdu Uitgevers, The Hague).

Cover illustration: C. Kuiper, Family portrait of 29-year old Pieter Blussé, 1777. See also page 85. Photograph: René Gerritsen, Amsterdam.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Baggerman, Arianne.

Publishing policies and family strategies : the fortunes of a Dutch publishing house in the 18th and early 19th centuries / by Arianne Baggerman.

pages cm. -- (Library of the written word, ISSN 1874-4834 ; volume 32. The handpress world ; volume 24)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-90-04-25794-8 (hardback : acid-free paper) -- ISBN 978-90-04-25795-5 (e-book) 1. A. Blussé en Zoon--History. 2. Blussé, Abraham, Sr., 1726-1808. 3. Blussé, Pieter, Sr., 1748-1823. 4. Publishers and publishing--Netherlands--Biography. 5. Book industries and trade--Netherlands--History--18th century. 6. Book industries and trade--Netherlands--History--19th century. 7. Books and reading--Netherlands--History--18th century. 8. Books and reading--Netherlands--History--19th century. I. Title.

Z358.A32B35 2013

338.7'61070509492--dc23

2013031791

This publication has been typeset in the multilingual “Brill” typeface. With over 5,100 characters covering Latin, IPA, Greek, and Cyrillic, this typeface is especially suitable for use in the humanities. For more information, please see www.brill.nl/brill-typeface.

ISSN 1874-4834

ISBN 978-90-04-25794-8 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-25795-5 (e-book)

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This book is printed on acid-free paper.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Amsterdamsche Courant
ARA	Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague
BFA	Family Archive Blussé
BFA ong.	Family Archive Blussé without inventory
CBG	Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie, The Hague
DC	Dordrechtsche Courant
GAD	Gemeentearchief Dordrecht
GAH	Gemeentearchief Haarlem
GAL	Gemeentearchief Leiden
GAR	Gemeentearchief Rotterdam
HC	's-Gravenhaegsche Courant
IB	Iconografisch Bureau, The Hague
KB	Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague
KVBB	Koninklijke Vereniging voor de Bevordering van de Belangen des Boekhandels
LC	Leidsche Courant
OHC	Oprechte Haerlemsche Courant
PA	Personal Archive
RAG	Rijksarchief Gelderland
RANB	Rijksarchief Noord-Brabant
RANH	Rijksarchief Noord-Holland
RC	Rotterdamsche Courant
SVC	's-Gravenhaegsche Vrijdaegsche Courant
UBA	Universiteitsbibliotheek Amsterdam
UBL	Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden
UBU	Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is a slightly revised edition of my dissertation of 2000 in the series *Nederlandse cultuur in Europese context* (Dutch culture in a European context).

I thank the Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO) for funding the research on which this book is based, as well as the translation.

I would also like to thank, again, all colleagues, friends and family, already more profusely thanked in the dissertation for their help, criticism, advice, support and inspiration: the archivists of the Dordrecht Municipal Archive, Peter Altena, Hans, Bas en Trijnie Baggerman, Marco Berg, Adolph, Leonard en Pieter Blussé van Oud-Alblas, Han Brouwer, Roel Bosch, Rudolf Dekker, Cees Essenboom, Willem Frijhoff, Ellen Grabowski, Frans Grijzenhout, Anna de Haas, Mariëtte Havemans, Leon van der Hoeven, Gert-Jan Johannes, Ton Jongenelen, Joost Kloek, Hanna Kool, Evelien Koolhaas, José de Krijf, Hendrik-Jan van Leusen, Wijnand Mijnhardt, Annemiek Overbeke, Ad Molendijk, Gerard Schulte-Nordholt, Gabriël Pastoor, Annette Sluimer and Rietje van Vliet.

INTRODUCTION

FROM CLUTTER BEAST TO GHOST WRITER. THE INVISIBLE HAND IN A FAMILY ARCHIVE

*...but the Clutter Beast would not leave him alone. 'The papers are in that cupboard,' it called out cheerfully, 'so get cracking!' 'Umph,' panted Oliver B. Bumble, 'what was my faithful servant Joost thinking, storing my notes in such an out-of-the-way place? What kind of wonderful cupboard is this anyway?' 'It's a clutter cupboard,' explained the beast, 'beautiful on the outside, but a mess on the inside. Open it, and let's get down to work.'*¹

Perhaps the eighteenth-century Dordrecht publisher Pieter Blussé reacted just like the Dutch cartoon character Sir Oliver B. Bumble, when he opened the cupboard filled with his autobiographical notes and was overwhelmed by an avalanche of paper, which could be stopped only by closing the door again as quickly as possible. It appears, in fact, that Pieter Blussé—like Ollie Bumble—postponed writing his autobiography until it was too late, because when he died unexpectedly on 15 June 1823 at the age of seventy-five, he burdened his descendants with a chaotic mess of random notes and the mere bare bones of an autobiographical sketch. These notes reveal that Pieter had intended to divide his autobiography into four chapters:

Having given a sketch of my childhood and youth, it is my wish to leave a record of my adult life too. Such an ample vista (spanning half a century) opens up before me that I shall perhaps have the best chance of success if I dwell on:

- I My domestic life and profession
- II My service to the church
- III My political conduct
- IV My personal behaviour in general²

Pieter Blussé managed to work up the notes of the first chapter only, which dealt with his domestic life and profession. The second, third and fourth chapters exist only as a collection of key words, and even those are sometimes abbreviated for the sake of convenience. Later generations of Blussés, who tried to take the torch from Pieter, confined themselves mainly to

¹ M. Toonder, 'Het Mengeldier' in *ibid.*, *Heer Bommel sluit aan* (Amsterdam 1991) 108.

² GAD, BFA, inv. 11.



1. The contents of one of the eighty-two boxes in the Blussé family archive. Dordrecht Municipal Archives.

collecting countless obituaries, birth announcements and other familial *faits-divers*, which ended up, unsorted, in various attics, along with the remains of their own lives: photographs, commemorative portfolios, ledgers, locks of hair, menus, recipes, dissertations and political speeches.

Later in life Pieter's son, Abraham Blussé Jr, collected the letters of his grandfather and father, and copied out some of their notes. He was keen on genealogical research, and everyone by the name of Blussé was fair game. He traced possible ancestors by visiting cemeteries and reading the gravestones. After being subjected to thorough research, the Blussés who proved not to belong to the family were relegated to a file labelled 'Blussés unrelated to us'.³

This file—together with Abraham's other genealogical notes, his father's and grandfather's notes, and the mass of paperwork documenting his own

³ GAD, BFA, unsorted box 22.

life—were passed down to a succession of descendants before ending up with P. Blussé van Oud-Alblas, a solicitor born in 1874. This Blussé set himself the task of gathering together the family archives. Illustrative of the passionate interest he took in his ancestry is the letter he wrote to Mr S.W.C. Six, director of the Simon van Gijn Museum in Dordrecht. Six had received from a certain Miss Moll the birth and death announcements of numerous eighteenth-century Blussés, and upon asking P. Blussé for an explanation, received the following reply:

I thank you for your letter of 15 May with enclosures. The happy mother is Sophia Christina Vermeer, wife of Pieter Blussé van Oud-Alblas, Abraham's son. A short imperious lady from the vicinity of Zevenaar, she was called 'the Prussian' by the other members of the family. Sophia and her husband had eleven children, and she was described as a 'cannon' from behind and a 'milch cow' from the front by the late honourable Pierre Louis Francois Blussé, one of her grandsons. ... Sophia Arnolda Christina Vermeer is my great-great-grandmother on my father's side. I find it rather strange that such papers were not first offered to me. I am, after all, a member of the family, not a stranger, and I'm known to take an interest in such matters.⁴

Ideas about what is worth saving can change over time, as evidenced by the comments jotted down on some of the envelopes preserved in the archive. A case in point is a box file with the following inscription in ballpoint pen: 'From the estate of Abraham Blussé Jr. Bundle containing all kinds of nice things'.⁵ Its contents include a thick stack of papers, on which another hand wrote in brown ink: 'Papers from the chiffonnier, probably of no importance, sort out later'. Above this—written in ballpoint pen on a red-and-white twentieth-century sticker—appear the words: 'From the estate of Abraham Blussé Jr. Particularly amusing'. Apparently yet another member of the family was tempted by this recommendation to read these papers. He, too, tried to entice later researchers by pencilling on the back of the envelope 'Very amusing'. I was repeatedly confronted with Blussés who looked to the past, bravely trying to collect and preserve the remnants of previous generations. Some of them made futile attempts to put it all into some kind of logical order, but their efforts to produce written results—if indeed that was ever their intention—came to nothing.

And the clutter cupboard, which was gradually filling up, was always handed down to the following generation, until it finally came to rest, around 1950, in the Dordrecht City Archives. The plan was to draw up an

⁴ GAD, BFA, unsorted box 49, dated 16 May 1935.

⁵ GAD, BFA unsorted box 3.

inventory of the contents as soon as possible, but in 1973, when Mr A. Blussé van Oud-Alblas, the last key-holder, returned to the Archives, it appeared that no attempt had yet been made to sort out the contents. Even so, some of the Blussé papers had inexplicably disappeared, among them a stack of ships' logs from the archive of the family shipping company. These nineteenth-century logs had braved the seven seas, but they were destined for a watery grave in the cellars of the Dordrecht City Archives during the disastrous flooding of 1953. The family chronicle for which successive generations of Blussés had collected material remained unwritten. Stashed away in the cellar of the Dordrecht City Archives, the surviving eighty-four boxes—filled with the uninventoried and chaotically assembled relics of people's lives—were lying in wait for a victim: someone who felt called upon to fulfil the role of 'clutter beast'.

That someone turned out to be me. Soon after entering the building for the first time, I realised that the conditions seemed ideal: I would resurrect the calling cards, obituaries, scribbled notes and letters in those boxes and make sure that, even if they were to be denied the appreciation they deserved as family heirlooms, at least they would be granted the recognition they deserved as historical documents. Searching for a well-stocked archive of an eighteenth-century publishing house, I was not so much bent on finding memorabilia as I was intent on gaining insight into an important period in the development of the book trade in the Netherlands: the period in which, at least according to received opinion, a 'reading revolution' was thought to have taken place.

Perhaps this hypothesis—meanwhile hotly disputed among researchers into eighteenth-century cultural infrastructure—needs some introduction. In a nutshell, the 'reading revolution'—said to have taken place in the second half of the eighteenth century and to have spread from Germany to the Netherlands—presupposes a distinct increase in the reading public and a marked change in their reading habits. It is thought that readers, no longer content to read and reread a small body of mostly religious writings, were beginning to demand more varied subject matter. Yet even though they read more—and more widely—they also read more superficially. The alleged rise at this time of the novel and of publishing firms specialising in Dutch-language publications is said to have been a natural result of this trend, which became apparent around the mid-eighteenth century and was purported to result from the expansion of the reading public to include the lower echelons of society: those who could read Dutch but not Latin.

This hypothesis was first put forward in 1974 by the German historian Rolf Engelsing in his book *Der Bürger als Leser*.⁶ Engelsing paid more attention, however, to the German *Sonderweg*. Germany was a special case, in his view, because the reading revolution was thought to be a surrogate for the political freedom enjoyed by the French since the Revolution and the economic achievements that the Industrial Revolution had brought to the English middle classes. Engelsing also warned against exaggerating the speed at which these changes took place, and pointed out that intensive and extensive reading did not necessarily preclude one another.⁷ These nuances faded away, however, during the debate sparked by the publication of Engelsing's hypothesis, since which time its simplified variant (as outlined above) has become the starting point for the research into reading practices undertaken in recent decades.

The reception of the idea of a reading revolution would, in itself, provide enough material for an in-depth study of the reading habits and horizon of expectation of twentieth-century historians: Why was so little attention paid to the supposed qualitative changes in the reading behaviour of eighteenth-century readers, and why were scholars so obsessed with the quantitative aspect of the theory? How could the term 'revolution' be so blithely equated with wholesale change? Having studied the reception of Engelsing's theory, one could then investigate its relationship to a number of internal peculiarities of the twentieth-century book market, for the fact is that Engelsing's German study has never been translated into English. Joost Kloek—who went back to the original theory and re-examined it in the light of its pre-history and all its shades of meaning—points in this context to the penchant for drama inherent in the historian's trade. He even goes so far as to accuse Engelsing, who larded his study with sensational eye-witness accounts of unprecedented hunger for the written word, of indulging his desire to dramatise the story.⁸

If we take stock of the writings on the eighteenth-century reading culture published in the Netherlands in recent years, the question arises as to whether that penchant for drama was also the greatest stumbling block for

⁶ Rolf Engelsing, *Der Bürger als Leser. Lesergeschichte in Deutschland 1500-1800* (Stuttgart 1974).

⁷ On this subject, see J.J. Kloek, 'Reconsidering the reading revolution: the thesis of the "reading revolution" and a Dutch bookseller's clientele around 1800', *Poetics* 26 (1999) 289-307, esp. 289-92. Kloek previously pointed out the nuances in the hypothesis in *ibid.*, 'De lezer als burger. Het literaire publiek in de achttiende eeuw', *De achttiende eeuw* 26 (1994) 2, 177-91.

⁸ Kloek, 'Reconsidering the reading revolution', 292-93.

Dutch historians. Not a single historian has yet ventured to study either the 'reading mania' that raged in the eighteenth-century Republic,⁹ or the origins of literary criticism. Moreover, the analysis of reading behaviour and readers' experiences based on information gleaned from ego-documents is still in its infancy.¹⁰ Even so, we now have at our disposal a number of impressive studies which attempt by quantitative means to test the hypothesis of the reading revolution.¹¹ Readers who like tragedy should skip to the concluding paragraphs of these studies, in which the 'genesis of a topos', as Han Brouwer puts it, dramatically unfolds.¹² No empirical proof of a reading revolution was to be found, and this led Wijnand Mijnhardt and Joost Kloek to write that 'the reading revolution could be suitably relegated to the rubbish bin of history'.¹³ In Brouwer's dissertation, the disappointing sales figures of a number of eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century booksellers prompted him to seek the revolution mainly in the increase in writing skills.¹⁴ In his book on periodicals published in 1995, Gert-Jan Johannes concludes that the market for Dutch-language periodicals was so limited that publishers were forced to cater for the widest possible readership.¹⁵ José de Kruif's conclusions destroyed what remained of the 'reading revolution' hypothesis. In her dissertation on the books listed in estate inventories

⁹ This debate is discussed in the greatest detail in J.J. Kloek, *Over Werther geschreven ... Nederlandse reacties op Goethes Werther 1775-1800. Proeve van historisch receptie-onderzoek* (Utrecht 1985).

¹⁰ A. Baggerman, 'Lezen tot de laatste snik. Otto van Eck en zijn dagelijkse literatuur (1780-1798)', *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse boekgeschiedenis* 1 (1994) 57-88.

¹¹ H. Brouwer, 'Leescultuur in Zwolle. Boekaanschaf en boekgebruik (1777-1854)', *Zwols Historisch Jaarboek* 4 (1987) 47-73; *ibid.*, 'Lesekulturforschung in den Niederlanden. Buchhandel und Lesepublikum im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert', *Wolfenbütteler Notizen zur Buchgeschichte* 17 (1992) 177-90; *ibid.*, 'Lezen en schrijven in de provincie. De boeken van Zwolse boekverkopers 1777-1849' (Leiden 1995); J.J. Kloek and W.W. Mijnhardt, 'In andermans boeken is het duister lezen. Reconstructie van de vroeg negentiende-eeuwse leescultuur in Middelburg op basis van een boekhandelsadministratie', *Forum der letteren* 29 (1988) 15-29; *ibid.*, 'Bij Van Benthem geboekt. Een reconstructie van het Middelburgs koperspubliek in 1808' in W. van den Berg and J. Stouten (eds.), *Het woord aan de lezers. Zeven literatuurhistorische verkenningen* (Groningen 1987) 142-65; *ibid.*, *Leescultuur in Middelburg aan het begin van de negentiende eeuw* (Middelburg 1988); J. de Kruif, '"En nog enige boeken van weinig waarde". Boeken in Haagse boedelinventarissen halverwege de 18e eeuw', *Historisch tijdschrift Holland* 26 (1994) 314-27; *ibid.*, *Liefhebbers en gewoontelezers. Leescultuur in Den Haag in de achttiende eeuw* (Zutphen 1999).

¹² Brouwer, *Lezen en schrijven in de provincie*, 17.

¹³ J.J. Kloek and W.W. Mijnhardt, 'Lezersrevolutie of literaire socialisatie?' in J. Goedegebuure (ed.), *Nieuwe wegen in taal- en literatuurwetenschap. Handelingen van het eenenvertigste filologencongres* (Tilburg 1993) 211-24, esp. 219.

¹⁴ Brouwer, *Lezen en schrijven in de provincie*, 291-309.

¹⁵ G.J. Johannes, *De barometer van de smaak. Tijdschriften in Nederland 1770-1830* (The Hague 1995) [= *Nederlandse cultuur in Europese context* 2] 191-95.

in The Hague, she attributes the stagnation of the book market in the second half of the eighteenth century to economic conditions.¹⁶

It is not Engelsing's supposedly uncontrollable urge to tell grand, melodramatic stories, but the positivist approach and the inability to resist debunking history which have so far prevented the full exploration of several facets of eighteenth-century reading culture. Quantifiable information is essential to this type of research. Readers must therefore be reduced to buyers and owners, their most important characteristic being their tax assessment. Books cannot be weighed according to their contents, but they can be assigned to different genres. The resulting distant views of the literary landscape are, above all, static. Despite the huge amount of information gathered in recent years on the numbers of readers, their social background and their preferences—the meagre conclusion is that in the second half of the eighteenth century, something did *not* happen. It is time to begin the descent towards what will necessarily be a less clear picture of readers ensconced behind their bookcases and booksellers manning the counters of their shops, bearing in mind that the laborious process of quantifying all those book titles and book owners has, in the end, laid the foundation for a more qualitative approach.

Answering the questions posed by the multi-faceted world of the book in the eighteenth century can be accomplished only on a micro-level: not from an ivory tower high above the landscape, but from a modest seat on the ground. What effect did books have on the lives and mindsets of publishers, authors and readers? To what end and by which means were books produced, distributed and read? To be sure, one can attempt to inhabit the world of contemporary authors, readers and printers with the aim of observing developments from their particular vantage points. There is a lot to be said, however, for doing this from the publisher's perspective for a change, since a publisher who understands his business will engage in all these activities.¹⁷ Indeed, in studies of modern publishing, the all-impor-

¹⁶ De Kruijff, *Liefhebbers en gewoontelezers*, 135-45.

¹⁷ Biographies of Dutch publishers active before 1900 are rare. Examples include P.G. Hofstijzer, *Engelse boekverkopers bij de beurs. De geschiedenis van de Amsterdamse boekhandels Bruyning en Swart, 1637-1724* (Amsterdam 1987) [= *Studies van het instituut voor intellectuele betrekkingen tussen de Westeuropese landen in de moderne tijd* 16]; O.S. Lankhorst, *Reinier Leers (1654-1714). Uitgever & boekverkoper te Rotterdam* (Amsterdam/Maarssen 1983) [= *Studies van het instituut voor intellectuele betrekkingen tussen de Westeuropese landen in de zeventiende eeuw* 10]; B.P.M. Dongelmans, *Johannes Immerzeel junior (1776-1841). Het bedrijf van een uitgever-boekhandelaar in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw* (Amstelveen 1992). In addition to these, a number of dissertations are being written: Henk Borst's dissertation on the seventeenth-

tant publisher is referred to metaphorically as a 'gatekeeper of ideas', a person who 'plays a decisive role in the selection, production, distribution and therefore also in the immaterial dissemination of cultural products'.¹⁸ To enable such micro-level research, there must be enough material on the publisher in question to allow very close scrutiny indeed.

Against this background, the Blussé family archive proved to be a treasure trove of information, which in itself poses new questions and compels the researcher to strike out on new paths. And that is a unique opportunity, because the eighty-four boxes in the Dordrecht City Archives contrast sharply with the thin files of archival documents on other eighteenth-century publishers in the library of the Royal Dutch Book Trade Association (Koninklijke vereniging ter bevordering van de belangen des boekhandels).¹⁹

To start with, however, the dozens of metres of unsorted archival material had to be explored, and I undertook this chore with alacrity.²⁰ Sifting through the contents of the boxes, I often felt that I was experiencing the joy described by Simon Schama—the author of *Patriots and Liberators: Revolution in the Netherlands, 1780-1813*—whose research made him feel as though he were 'breaking bread with the dead':

... in the reading room I discovered, on a beautiful afternoon in July, with sunlight flooding the room, a sealed packet of letters that had belonged to a member of the Batavian National Assembly. After nervously breaking the seal, which still bore the sadly enthusiastic message of 'one and indivisible', three things fell on the table: a small card, the pass that admitted its bearer to the assembly hall in the Binnenhof; a subscription to a series of musical events in The Hague in the year in question, 1799; and, after shaking the packet again, a lock of auburn hair, held together by a pink ribbon, still smelling vaguely of a revolutionary spring of long ago. These three objects represented the keystones, the emblems of a man's life and of his generation: love, art and politics.²¹

century Amsterdam publishing firm of Van Ravesteijn; Paul Koopman's on the early seventeenth-century publisher Nicolaas Biestkens; Ellen Grabowsky's on the Amsterdam publisher Jacob Lescaille and other publishers of plays who were active in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

¹⁸ S. van Voorst, *Weten wat er in de wereld te koop is. Vier Nederlandse uitgeverijen en hun vertaalde fondsen 1945-1970* (The Hague 1997) 6. Cf. *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective: 1950 Prosperity and Welfare*, 442-45.

¹⁹ Subsequently referred to in footnotes as KVBBB.

²⁰ J. Tollebeek and T. Verschaffel, *De vreugden van Houssaye. Apologie van de historische interesse* (Amsterdam 1992).

²¹ S. Schama, *Patriotten en bevrijders. Revolutie in de Noordelijke Nederlanden 1780-1813* (4th edition; Amsterdam 1989) 16. Translation of *Patriots and Liberators. Revolution in the Netherlands 1780-1813* (New York 1977).

There were emblems galore in the Blussé family archive—locks of hair, passports, books of riddles, horoscopes, doctors' bills and family albums—a seemingly endless supply of memorabilia. Soon I was no longer tempted by locks of hair and plaits. Unlike Schama—a true connoisseur, who had the courage to sniff the perfumed lock of hair he found and savour its fragrance—I started to stuff such things back into their envelopes as quickly as possible. It was precisely those sources with a direct bearing on my research—business letters, ledgers, confraternity books, shop inventories, publishing contracts and publishers' correspondence—which proved to be rare in this archive. The life and work of the protagonist of this book, the eighteenth-century publisher Pieter Blussé Sr, had to be pieced together from snippets of information, whose relevance would become apparent only after the puzzle had been completed. Countless pieces of the puzzle, which seemed at first to fit nowhere, proved on closer inspection to be important. Then again, some that seemed extremely important at first glance eventually turned out to be of no consequence. When the clouds of dust had settled, one thing in particular became clear: in studying this archive, it would be essential not to lose sight of the central research questions.

The main objective was to discover how the publishing firm of Blussé was organised and the kind of books it published. My findings would tell us more about the infrastructural possibilities and impossibilities under which this firm was forced to operate. My 'businesslike' attitude to the material did not, however, guarantee a clear path through the archive. For example, an interesting question in the context of my research was the social status and circumstances of the members of this publishing firm: Abraham Blussé Sr, his son Pieter Blussé Sr and the latter's sons Abraham Blussé Jr, Adolph Blussé and Pieter Blussé Jr. We still know little about the social status of publishers in this period. Was the publishing firm a means of upward mobility? Did the social status of a publisher depend on the kind of books he published? The answer to the second question might prove to be important in interpreting his catalogue and stock list, just as I needed to know the nature of his assets in order to determine how representative his stock list was. Did he have such a keen understanding of the market that his publishing business made him wealthy? Or did other sources of income enable him to publish works that were idealistically appealing but unprofitable? A publisher's personal, non-commercial motives could, after all, explain the anomalies in his list. Perhaps it was not so difficult in the eighteenth century to combine business acumen and idealism, but in order

to say anything meaningful on this subject, I needed to know more about the publisher's social status and the times in which he lived. This piqued my curiosity as to the publisher's motives and the social network in which he operated. It was precisely these aspects that could be elucidated with the aid of such things as calling cards, letters, scribbled notes and notarial acts.

The question of the family's prosperity and the source of their wealth prompted me to stray from the beaten path. The economic success of the Blussé family clearly emerges from the archival material. In 1745 Abraham Blussé Sr had to borrow part of the purchase price—2,210 guilders—of his business premises from his brother, who was a master plumber. When Abraham died, however, his estate was worth 40,000 guilders.²² By contrast, when his son Pieter died in 1823, he possessed 283,500 guilders and the manor of Oud-Alblas.²³ If we compare the two extant inventories of his property—one drawn up in 1773 and the other in 1803—we see that Pieter's fortune started to increase dramatically after 1803. In 1773 his estate was worth approximately 20,000 guilders, in 1803 about 40,000, and in 1823 nearly 300,000.²⁴ Indeed, the bookselling and publishing firm of Blussé seems to have expanded enormously in the first decades of the nineteenth century. But are we justified in drawing this conclusion?

The family archive held even more surprises, for these boxes also contained a series of Pieter Blussé Sr's private account books for the years 1811-23. They show him to have been a particularly versatile businessman, who was not only a bookseller, publisher, postmaster, printer and editor-in-chief of a newspaper, but was also active in the stock market, the wine trade and flax storage. It was quite possible, therefore, that it was not his bookselling and publishing firm that made him wealthy so much as his other activities.

For example, did Pieter owe his fortune to the lottery office that he took over from his father in 1803? On the face of it, this does not seem likely, since Abraham Sr, who had run the lottery office in the preceding years, had never become hugely wealthy from it. Had the reforms implemented around 1800 (of which I found other traces in the archive) made this activity more lucrative? Had he perhaps won a prize in his own lottery?

²² See Chapter One.

²³ See Chapter Five.

²⁴ See Chapter Five.

Even though the reading revolution may be in doubt, the last quarter of the eighteenth century was certainly a time of political revolution. In the Netherlands there were even two revolutionary episodes: the Patriot Revolution in the 1780s and the Batavian Revolution of 1795, the latter's aftershocks continuing until 1798. To gain a proper understanding of Pieter's non-commercial motives as a publisher, it was essential to know something about his political ideas and allegiances in this period of turmoil. The family archive was a rich source of this information as well, for it contained numerous drafts of the speeches Pieter gave at town council meetings between 1795 and 1798. For example:

Speech given at the council meeting, prompted by the proposal put forward by Citizen Verbeek that a report should be issued in accordance with his proposal, but with the amendment that one should leave the fixing of quotas to the representatives.²⁵

What was the subject at hand? The imbroglios of Dordrecht politics at that time are still virgin territory, so it was necessary to approach the issue in a roundabout manner, by working my way through the minutes of the council meetings and by reading secondary literature on the political intrigues in other cities.

Now that the topic of Pieter's political exploits had come up, the subject of my research became increasingly insistent. Below the text of the above-mentioned speech appear notes he wrote later, which seem to be a delicate hint to any future biographer who is in doubt about what information to include:

NB memo of how I acted in the Municipality in connection with billeting the troops and was myself concerned in this matter at the Roode Hert ditto in the town council as regards the proposition concerning the office and special report of burgher V.
and ditto concerning a ball to be given, daily wages, secretary and so on.²⁶

And so, as my research progressed, alongside the mountain of contextless material rose stacks of books and articles: on the organisation of manors, on the political situation after 1795, on the lottery, the *tiërcering* of 1810 (when the interest paid on government bonds was reduced by two-thirds),

²⁵ 'Aanspr. gedaan in den Raad bij de gelegenh. dat er op voorstel van den burger Verbeek een Rapprt. werd uitgebracht conform zijn voorstel, alleen met de verandering dat men de quotisatie aan de Representanten overliet': GAD, BFA, unsorted box 51. On this subject, see Chapter Three.

²⁶ See Chapter Three.

the workings of the human memory, the organisation of civic militias, the Napoleonic plans regarding the aristocracy, and books with such appealing titles as 'Bookkeeping for the practical diploma 1' and 'Commercial knowledge for the practical examinations'.

And Pieter Blussé? This frugal and prudent businessman had every reason to be satisfied. He had revamped his archive by destroying most of his business records, accidentally saving only one page of his confraternity book by using it to wrap up a bundle of his father's occasional poems.²⁷ He shrewdly left just enough material to encourage the future historian, but too little to divert attention from himself. It was beginning to look as though the last three chapters he had planned for his autobiography—his 'service to the church', his 'political conduct' and his 'personal behaviour in general'—would yet be written, quite serendipitously, by a ghost writer.

Pieter's unfinished autobiography will serve as the framework for this study, but this does not mean that the stories which emerge from his notes will always take the direction he desired. As much as it would have pleased him, this will not be a hagiography, nor will Pieter be given a chance to dominate the book. A large part of Chapter One is devoted to the founder of the publishing company, Abraham Blussé, Pieter's father. Chapter Two discusses the market for books in the Dutch Republic, the changes that took place in the second half of the eighteenth century, and the initiatives developed by Abraham and Pieter Blussé. Chapter Three focuses on Pieter Blussé by shedding light on his personal life and political career, as well as his career as a publisher. Chapter Four consists of a number of essays in which the book market is explored from the publisher's viewpoint—those of both Pieter Blussé and Willem Holtrop, his pupil and later competitor. Chapter Five revolves around Pieter's sons, the third generation of publishers active in the firm of A. Blussé & Son. This chapter focuses not only on their respective roles within the firm but also on their upbringing and formal education. Pieter's sons figure variously as authors, translators, publishers, printers, distributors and readers within the publication–distribution–consumption triad that comprises Robert Darnton's communication circuit, every part of which contributes to the production and reproduction of ideas and ways of thinking.²⁸ Chapter Six analyses the publishing activities of the Blussé family, presents an overview of their stock list, and sketches their professional profile.

²⁷ GAD, BFA, box 52.

²⁸ R. Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette. Reflections in Cultural History* (New York 1990) 112.

In the Epilogue, what is perhaps the most neglected group within the production–distribution–consumption circuit is given the floor: the journeymen printers. Their songs prompt us to take another look—this time with the knowledge acquired during the course of our research—to the hypothesis of the reading revolution.

Chapter One, however, focuses on the protagonist of this book—Pieter Blussé—who, by virtue of the stack of love letters he contributed to this archive, challenges the researcher to establish his credentials as a companion, as a guide through the eighteenth-century world of the book. Although Pieter thought nothing of interrupting the romantic outpourings in his letters to Sophia with a gruff ‘now let’s get down to business’, in this chapter the patience of some readers who would rather do just that will be put to the test. They will prefer Chapters Two, Four and Six, which deal mainly with the commercial side of the book business. What follows, however, will show that the functioning of the bookselling and publishing firm of A. Blussé & Son and the list it built up cannot be separated from the so-called ‘human element’, as Marja Keyser put it. In imitation of her teacher, Herman de la Fontaine Verwey, she urges book historians to ask themselves the same question, over and over again: ‘Who was that remarkable man?’²⁹

²⁹ M. Keyser, ‘Wie was die merkwaardige man? Het menselijk element in de boekgeschiedenis’, *Incipit* (Leiden 1995) 17–24, esp. 24.

CHAPTER ONE

DESTINED FOR EACH OTHER. MAKING THE ACQUAINTANCE OF PIETER BLUSSÉ

*I made my way there with leaden steps. But heavens! What a change then came over me! No sooner had I laid eyes on my unforgettable Sophia than I felt in my innermost being a voice speaking to me from on high: This shall be your lot!*¹

He loved to exaggerate, and he sometimes drew hasty conclusions, so why should we take Pieter Blussé seriously when he claims that his unexpected meeting with Sophia Vermeer was love at first sight? Why should we believe him when he says that upon first seeing her he realised that God had intended them for each other? Before daring to give free rein to his love, however, he first inquired into the background and social standing of this girl, who seemed to be such an attractive match.

The meeting took place in the summer of 1770. The young bookseller Pieter Blussé, only twenty-two but already convinced—after a couple of failed attempts at matchmaking on the part of his father—that he would ‘never wear the harness of love’, set out for Rotterdam in the company of his sister. This time he unsuspectingly found himself in the hands of a female Cupid—his Aunt Noot²—for it was she who had invited Pieter’s sister Geertruida, his junior by six years, to spend the week of the annual fair in Rotterdam. Having casually suggested that Pieter come along too, she then arranged for them to attend a tea party at the Van Sprangs’ the moment they arrived. Mrs van Sprang, Aunt Noot’s niece, had just had a baby, and so could not chaperone her seventeen-year-old sister Sophia Vermeer. A female cousin of Sophia’s, who was also staying with Mrs Sprang, was likewise in need of an escort, so Aunt Noot suggested that Sophia and her cousin join Pieter and Geertruida. Pieter’s reluctance to oblige made no impression on her: ‘The message was delivered, but they replied that they would be waiting for us. I made my way there with leaden steps.’

¹ GAD, BFA, inv. 11. Unless otherwise stated, the following quotations are taken from this source.

² Cornelia Vallaré, widow of the Rotterdam wine merchant, Hendrik Noot. Regarding her relationship to Pieter Blussé, see p. 24.

Pieter's determination to remain aloof dissolved at the sight of Sophia. 'Enchanted by her lovely face, fair figure and mild manners, my heart was, from the very beginning, inflamed with the purest regard and most tender affection for her.' But the turbulent emotions to which Pieter succumbed did not prevent him from inquiring at the earliest opportunity into the background and fortune of this beauty. He must have been satisfied with what he found out. His aunt informed Pieter 'as to her status and background', and no doubt told him that Sophia was an orphan 'from a distinguished family'. Her father had held the offices of magistrate, tax collector and secretary to the town of Zevenaar, as had his father and grandfather before him. Sophia's mother, Elisabeth Geertruida Hecking, also came from a prominent family of magistrates and dike-graves in the area of Cleves.³

Pieter wasted no time in declaring his love: a mere three days after meeting Sophia he wrote: 'Tired of concealing what was in my heart, I revealed with the greatest warmth that she was mine, that to love her and further her happiness would henceforth be my greatest source of worldly bliss.' Pieter's autobiographical notes do not tell us how Sophia reacted to his declaration of love, but Pieter's first love letter to her, written immediately after his return from Rotterdam, reveals that their relationship had already passed the Platonic stage. Indeed, Pieter expresses the hope that he will soon be able 'to enjoy again the privilege of pressing soft kisses on your lovely lips ... and to embrace you with the tenderest affection and delight, which neither my pen nor my tongue can describe'. Sophia, however, was far less inclined to make any promises. She preferred to wait and see how her guardians reacted. 'My parents', Pieter wrote to her, 'have already approved of my choice and consider me fortunate if I should receive your consent. I have every reason for satisfaction and happiness, since your brother and my parents put comfort and courage into my heart. You alone have left me in doubt and sent me away disconsolate, and only in order to please your honourable guardians, whom you rightly regard as worthy parents and whose advice you seek in a matter of such importance.'⁴

Pieter's parents had not wasted any time either. Scarcely a day after their son had declared his love for Sophia, they expressed their approval by paying an 'official' visit to Sophia and her sister and brother-in-law. The Van

³ See the handwritten family tree of the Vermeer family in the Dordrecht Municipal Archives, BFA, unsorted, box 4; CBG, Vermeer file; J.B. Maris van Sandelingenambacht, *Een hondertal Nederlandsche families* (Nijmegen 1946) 164-69, 175-78, 294-95.

⁴ GAD, BFA, inv. 10, letter of 2 September 1770.

Sprang family, with whom Sophia was staying, proved no less sympathetic to the idea, and ‘immediately offered Pieter their hospitality’. This exceptionally swift (by eighteenth-century standards) course of events came to an abrupt halt when the girl’s guardians entered the picture. To begin with, they caused the couple’s ‘conversation’—the stage at which sweethearts are given an opportunity to get to know each other better—to deteriorate into a long monologue on Pieter’s part.⁵ The ‘tender-hearted exchange of letters’ that occurred in this period, on which Pieter looked back with such pleasure while writing his autobiography, actually consisted of fifteen petitions to which Sophia did not reply. Only after receiving permission from her brother did Pieter’s beloved write him a short and rather businesslike letter.⁶ Sophia’s guardians were even more reserved when Pieter’s parents requested permission for their son to court Sophia. Pieter wrote: ‘Having received good reports about myself and my parents, they appeared at first to permit it; but eight weeks later, when I sought to pay my respects to those friends and ask for their consent to my most faithful union with their sister and niece, the tables had turned. Indeed, the uncle who lives in Cleves, an elderly and dignified man, informed me of his displeasure.’ Even in the final stages of the negotiations, when the marriage contract had to be drawn up and the banns signed, Sophia’s guardians seemed to be intent on thinking up insurmountable obstacles. The Blussés, however, were undaunted.

For instance, the guardians’ objection that Pieter Blussé, as a bookseller employed by his father, did not have his own business, was countered by Abraham Blussé, who immediately divided up the business, giving his son Pieter the bookshop, the publishing company and the bookbindery, and restricting his own activities to the administration of the lottery and the post office. Moreover, when the Blussés found the terms of the prenuptial agreement too restrictive, they threatened to take the Vermeers to court. The complications surrounding the prenuptial agreement will be dealt with later; the first thing we need to know is why Sophia’s guardians objected to Pieter Blussé as a marriage candidate.

Their lack of enthusiasm was no doubt the result of their inquiries into Pieter’s background, a subject mentioned repeatedly in Pieter’s and So-

⁵ Regarding the various stages, see D. Haks, *Huwelijk en gezin in Holland in de 17de en 18de eeuw. Processtukken en moralisten over aspecten van het laat 17de- en 18de-eeuwse gezinsleven* (Utrecht 1985) 110–11.

⁶ Sophia’s first letter to Pieter dates from 19 October 1770 (GAD, BFA, inv. 10).

phia's letters. The guardians were apparently trying, in Pieter's words, to obtain a 'more precise account of matters',⁷ or 'to gather reports on my person'.⁸ By eighteenth-century standards, a good match presupposed two people who did not differ appreciably in age, religion or social standing, so the guardians would have focused their attention on these three things.⁹ They would not have objected to the couple's difference in age—Pieter was twenty-two and Sophia just seventeen—certainly not at a time when it was generally thought that a man should be slightly older than his wife.¹⁰ Nor could Pieter's religious persuasion have caused any problems, since both the Blussés and the Vermeers were members of the Reformed Church. The only possible obstacle was the difference in their social standing. To form a clear idea of Pieter's background, the guardians undertook some research into his ancestors, his relatives, his training and social positions, any lucrative offices he might hold, and his financial circumstances and prospects for the future. These interests largely coincide with the central questions of this part of our research, which is reason enough to retrace the lines of inquiry pursued by the guardians: a notable trio consisting of Sophia's brother Johann Jacob Vermeer, secretary and dike-grave in Zevenaar, Berend Christiaan Hecking, a magistrate in Zevenaar, and her uncle Theodorus Wilhelmus Henricus van Oven, public prosecutor of Cleves. Was Pieter Blussé an adventurer who thought he could better his position by wooing a wealthy orphan, as the guardians' reaction suggests? Or did the guardians actually have evil intentions? Were they trying—as Pieter insinuates in his letters to Sophia—to prevent her from marrying in order to inherit her portion in the event of her premature death?

Ancestry

The roots of the Blussé family lie in the French-speaking part of the old county of Flanders: the village of Landas in the viscounty of Lille (in present-day France). This is where Anthoine Blussé, his wife Barbar and their son Pieter lived until some time between 1617 and 1624—thirty years after the great exodus but long before the repeal of the Edict of Nantes—when they moved for religious reasons to Dordrecht. The only other thing known

⁷ GAD, BFA, inv. 10, 16 October 1670.

⁸ GAD, BFA, inv. 10, 5 October 1770.

⁹ Haks, *Huwelijk en gezin in Holland*, 106.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

about these ancestors is that Anthoine was admitted to hospital in Leiden on 19 November 1627, at which time he was so poor that he could not pay for his treatment.¹¹ The couple later settled in Dordrecht, where their daughter Maria was born.¹²

Pieter Anthoniszoon Blussé, who was probably their only son, left more traces in the archives. On 14 April 1641 in Dordrecht, when he gave public notice of his intended marriage to his fellow townswoman Mayke van Botland, he gave his occupation as tinsmith and his street of residence as Nieuwstraat. On 16 May of that year he joined the Guild of St Luke as a tinsmith and tankard-maker.¹³ It is also known that from 1655 onwards he ran a carrier service to Leiden and Haarlem, and later to Amsterdam as well. In 1660 he even succeeded in turning this business into a hereditary office: he asked the town council of Dordrecht to appoint, after his death, one of his children as his successor, and the town councillors, apparently persuaded by the argument that his family depended on this income, granted his request.¹⁴ A century and a half later, his great-great-grandson and namesake Pieter Blussé van Oud-Alblas, who still held the post in 1795, found it difficult to imagine such financial dependence. In his autobiographical notes Pieter stresses the scant income to be derived from this activity—‘apart from our family’s exemption from paying postage for letters and parcels, there was little remuneration’—but conveniently ignores the huge advantages of ‘free postage’ for his family’s publishing business.¹⁵

In addition to the opportunity to distribute their goods inexpensively, Pieter’s seventeenth-century ancestors possessed a number of other things useful to the book trade: thread and lead. Pieter Anthoniszoon’s youngest son, Abraham Blussé, was—like his son and grandson after him—a book-binder, and probably combined this trade with that of thread-twister.¹⁶ His brother Johannes was a plumber—an occupation practised years later by

¹¹ His name is spelled Anthoine Blusée (GAL, hospital admissions, C.A. 48 no. 3, 19 November 1627, fol. 45).

¹² *De Nederlandsche Leeuw. Maandblad van het Koninklijk Nederlandsch Genootschap voor Geslacht- en Wapenkunde* 80 (1963) 388.

¹³ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 22. See also Maris van Sandelingenambacht, *Een honderdtal Nederlandsche families*, 158.

¹⁴ R.M. Velthuisen, *Abraham Blussé, eerste periode als dichter, 1726-1756* (unpublished master’s thesis, 1974) 111.

¹⁵ GAD, BFA, inv. 11.

¹⁶ Twining is one stage in spinning thread; it involves twisting single threads together. Maris van Sandelingenambacht, *Een honderdtal Nederlandsche families*, 158.

another of Abraham's grandsons¹⁷—and also ran a carrier service to Haarlem.¹⁸ After Johannes's death, Abraham, too, became a carrier, as well as a clerk at the inland post office managed by François van den Brandeler.¹⁹ To these functions he eventually added that of ship-owner. A list of seventeenth-century Dordrecht ship-owners records Abraham and a number of fellow townsmen as the joint owners of the flute (a vessel of war) *De Vriendschap* (Friendship).²⁰ He probably owned one-eighth of this ship, which was 140 feet long and 34 feet wide: a century later, in 1769, his grandson and namesake Abraham Blussé sold this share of the ship for 1,550 guilders.²¹

The two sons of the seventeenth-century Abraham Blussé, Pieter and Jacob, both appeared to be more drawn to seafaring than to artisanship. Jacob was serving as a midshipman for the Dutch East India Company (VOC) when he died, still unmarried, on 3 April 1715 at the Cape of Good Hope. Pieter, the only remaining son, was a petty officer in the VOC. Despite several promotions in the East Indies, whereby his monthly wage increased from 12 to 20 guilders, around 1722 he decided to play it safe:²² he returned to the Dutch Republic, where he worked for several years as a servant of the Amsterdam Booksellers' Guild,²³ before taking over his father's bookbindery in Dordrecht.²⁴ This was probably as early as 1726, because his youngest son, Abraham—the father of our Pieter Blussé and the fifth generation Blussé since the Flemish Anthoine—was baptised that year in Dordrecht. Abraham is recorded as the son of Pieter Blussé and Elisabeth van Hattem.²⁵

¹⁷ Adolph Blussé (1705-1761). He was a master plumber, as recorded, for instance, in a legal document of 1745 (GAD, notary B. van der Star, no. 868, 19 June 1745).

¹⁸ Velthuisen, *Abraham Blussé*, 112.

¹⁹ *De Nederlandsche Leeuw* 80 (1963) 387.

²⁰ J.L. van Dalen, *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht* (Dordrecht 1931-33) 325.

²¹ GAD, notary P.J. van Steenberghe, 2 December 1769.

²² *De Nederlandsche Leeuw* 80 (1963) 387-88.

²³ This appears in an unfiled note found in the Blussé family archive, inv. 3: '7 March 1724 in Amsterdam, Pieter Bluzé employed as a servant of the booksellers' guild, but replaced by another in September 1726, since he was to journey to the East Indies'. The first half of this statement was confirmed by research in the Amsterdam City Archives. I was not able to ascertain whether Pieter returned to the East.

²⁴ On 11 August 1722 he received his last salary, the sum of 400 guilders, from the Dutch East India Company (Maris van Sandelingenambacht, *Een honderdtal Nederlandsche families*, 388).

²⁵ GAD, Baptismal register of the Dutch Reformed Church, 1726. Elisabeth's ancestors, like those of her husband Pieter, had fled from Flanders to Dordrecht. See *De Nederlandsche Leeuw* 80 (1963) 390.

Unlike the Blussé family, for whom the sources dry up in the seventeenth century in Landas in France, the ancestors of Abraham's mother, Elisabeth van Hattem, can be traced as far back as the fourteenth century, when the Van Hattens belonged to the nobility in the Duchy of Guelders.²⁶ In 1769 a distant relative on the Van Hattem side of the family proudly told Abraham that his ancestors on his mother's side 'included many noble and distinguished families, among them Van Milligen, Van Deuren, Van Setten, Van Wijck, Van Eck, Van Bommel, Van Rhijnen, the Knights of Walebeek, Van der Vorst, Van Foreest, Van Moerbergen, Van Wulp, Van Renesse'.²⁷ Apparently Abraham was so impressed by this that he took a quarter from the Van Hattens' family arms and used it to devise a coat of arms for the Blussé family.²⁸ The link between the Guelders' nobility and Elisabeth van Hattem might have been tenuous, but her connection to Lydia Catharina van Hattem was much more direct.

This aunt of Elisabeth's had married exceptionally well by becoming the third wife of the immensely wealthy English duke, James Brydges, which enabled her to exchange her maiden name for the title of Duchess of Chandos.²⁹ Her husband had taken advantage of his position as paymaster to the British army under General Marlborough to amass in a short time a fortune estimated at 600,000 pounds sterling. This was enough not only to maintain the impressive country estate of Cannons, northwest of London—including its flamingos, parrots, eagles and American mockingbirds—but also to act as patron to the composer Georg Friedrich Handel, who served the duke for two years as Master of Music and conductor of his private orchestra. It was here that Handel found the peace and quiet to compose, among other things, the eleven Chandos Anthems named after his patron.³⁰

Through her correspondence with the Dordrecht plumber Arend van Hattem and later his son Adolph—Elisabeth's brother and nephew, respec-

²⁶ GAD, BFA, inv. 3. This contains the handwritten family tree of the Van Hattens sent in 1769 by C.W. van Hattem to Abraham Blussé. See also *De Nederlandsche Leeuw* 80 (1963) 391-93.

²⁷ GAD, BFA, inv. 3, letter from C.W. van Hattem to Abraham Blussé, 23 July 1769.

²⁸ For an illustration of this coat of arms, see Maris van Sandelingenambacht, *Een honderdtal Nederlandsche families*, 157.

²⁹ *De Nederlandsche Leeuw* 80 (1963) 390-91.

³⁰ Brydges's decadent lifestyle on this country estate is thought to have served as the model for Pope's 'Timon's Villa' (included in his *Moral Essays*) (J. Keates, *Handel. The man and his music* [London 1992] 78-85; R. Friedenthal, *Georg Friedrich Händel* [19th edition, Hamburg 1995] 62-67).

tively—the duchess kept in touch with her Dutch relatives.³¹ Her ignorance of the language—‘I cannot write in Dutch’—was fortunately no obstacle, because Adolph had a friend who was willing to translate these letters and even to supply them with explanatory comments.³² Thus a message of 1748 informed Adolph that Lady Chandos had granted a commission to ‘Mr Joseph Briscoe at the Fine Office’ and also that a minor misspelling could give that office an entirely different meaning: ‘not Fire Office, which is a different thing altogether’.³³ A change of address dated 1746—notifying the recipient of a move from the palace at Cannons to Shaw Hall in Berkshire—contains useful background information added by the translator: the duchess ‘is accustomed to live with His Grace the Duke ... in the splendid and unparalleled palace at Cannons in state and luxury, more like a king than a subject’.³⁴ Some of these letters concern not only a change of address, but also an advance on an expected inheritance. The sum of 60 pounds sterling was to be divided between himself, Adolph, and the children of the late Elisabeth van Hattem, Abraham and Adolph Blussé. Lady Chandos maintains that she decided upon this advance in view of her young age (nearly fifty-five): ‘It has pleased Providence to make me the last surviving grandchild of Grandfather van Hattem, but you are all younger, and because I am not yet fifty-five, if I don’t begin to give you a portion of the inheritance now, it could still take several years and some of you might die before being able to claim your share.’³⁵ Lady Chandos died two years later, in 1750, and left Adolph van Hattem, Abraham Blussé and Adolph Blussé 500 pounds sterling to divide among themselves.³⁶ For Abraham this meant a legacy of around 165 pounds. For the Duchess of Chandos, who also bequeathed in her will a quantity of precious diamonds, this would have been a small sum, but to Abraham Blussé it was a great deal of money.

On 21 June 1745 Abraham Blussé purchased business premises in the centre of Dordrecht (in Voorstraat near the Stock Exchange) for the sum

³¹ GAD, BFA, inv. 3.

³² *Ibid.*, 11 May 1736. It is not known who wrote this comment. It might have been the Dordrecht municipal translator John Holtrop, the English–Dutch translator employed later on by A. Blussé & Son. For more about this translator, see Chapter Six.

³³ *Ibid.*, August 1748.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 14 November 1746.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, August 1748.

³⁶ GAD, BFA, inv. 3 contains a Dutch version of her will, dated 23 January 1748, which reveals not only the date of her death but also the amount of her bequest.

of 2,210 guilders.³⁷ He had to borrow the capital from his brother Adolph, a master plumber and his senior by twenty-one years. In this building, previously owned by a confectioner, his father's bookbindery—which also sold books on occasion—expanded into a booksellers' and bookbinders' establishment under the name of Laurens Koster. Although there is scant information about the scale of his business and his financial position in these early years, we do know something about the income enjoyed by Abraham's parents in 1742, the year a poll tax was levied.³⁸

The fact that Pieter and Elisabeth did not belong to the eighty per cent of the population exempted from this income tax meant that they earned a reasonable income from their bookbinding business. They were, however, counted among the lowest in the high-income groups, because they were assigned to the lowest tax bracket.³⁹ Like some of their neighbours, such as the confectioner Clement Clever and the butcher Matthijs de Bie, they were required to pay 6 guilders in income tax. This category included large numbers of artisans and shopkeepers: coppersmiths, bakers, grocers, ironmongers and carpenters. Abraham Blussé's later competitor, the bookseller Johannes van Braam, was five brackets higher and thus required to pay 25 guilders.⁴⁰ The burgomaster Johan Gevaerts, who topped the list, had to pay 250 guilders in income tax. This is hardly surprising, since he lived in a house that cost him 612 guilders a year, employed seven servants, and had a country residence and two horses.⁴¹ By contrast, Abraham's parents had only one servant and a house that cost them 100 guilders a year. When they made their will that same year, they declared their estate to be worth less than 4,000 guilders.⁴² Indeed, the modest value of their furnishings became apparent at the time of their death. On 13 May 1746 the broth-

³⁷ GAD, notary B. van der Star, inv. 868, 16 June 1745 and 19 June 1745.

³⁸ Pieter Blussé is listed as a shopkeeper and 'letter carrier' living in Wijnstraat between Visbrug and Gravenstraat (ARA, Archief der rekenkamer ter auditie van de gemeeneland-srekeningen, inv. 28, Tweede wijk huisnr. 342).

³⁹ Only households with an annual income of 600 guilders or more were liable to this tax. The Blussés fell in the lowest category, just above the 'small burghers', a group that included small shopkeepers with an annual income of 500–600 guilders (J. de Vries and A. van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy. Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500-1815* (Cambridge 1997) 701). Regarding this tax, see J.L. van Zanden, 'De economie van Holland in de periode 1650-1805: groei of achteruitgang? Een overzicht van bronnen, problemen en resultaten', *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 102 (1987) 562-609, esp. 572.

⁴⁰ ARA, Rekenkamer ter auditie en opvolgende colleges, inv. 28, Wijnstraat huisnr. 433.

⁴¹ Ibid., derde wijk.

⁴² GAD, notary Justus de Caesteker, inv. 1018, 18 October 1742.

ers Adolph and Abraham Blussé appeared before the notary to declare that they had received their parents' bequests and that the rest of the estate—'consisting only of a small amount of cash and outstanding claims, as well as clothing, household goods, furniture and other items'—had been divided fairly between them. Unfortunately, their list was then destroyed in the presence of the notary.⁴³ In addition to his share of these household effects, Abraham inherited 100 guilders, savings valued at 400 guilders, 'a silver parrot's cage', 'a silver spoon and ditto fork', and 'all the equipment belonging to the bookbinding business and all the printed books'.⁴⁴

In view of his limited capital, Abraham's business—bookselling, book-binding and publishing, and sometimes printing publications for special occasions—could not have been larger than his father's in the first few years.⁴⁵ He belonged to the lowest segment of the middle class. His marriage in 1747 to Cornelia Vallaré—the daughter of François Vallaré (sheriff, dike-grave and secretary of Dirksland) and his second wife, Geertje Louisdochter van der Nath⁴⁶—was possibly above his station. To be sure, Dirksland (a small town on the island of Goeree-Overflakkee) was not very large, and François's career was far from exemplary—he was frequently reprimanded by the church council for brawling and 'drinking disturbances'—but a sheriff, secretary and dike-grave was considerably higher on the social ladder than a shopkeeper.⁴⁷ Several of Cornelia's sisters were more fortunate in their choice of husband, at least in social and monetary terms. Luisa Vallaré, for instance, married a magistrate of Dirksland; Johanna Vallaré married a man from The Hague, a collector of the excise tax on wine; and Neeltje Vallaré—Aunt Noot, who was later to play matchmaker to Pieter and Sophia—married a prominent wine merchant in Rotterdam.⁴⁸ The difference in social standing between Abraham Blussé and Cornelia Vallaré also emerges from the difference in their educations: Abraham was self-taught, whereas Cornelia had attended a boarding school in The Hague.⁴⁹ That her father, François Vallaré, left a considerable fortune

⁴³ GAD, notary H. van Wetten, 13 May 1746.

⁴⁴ GAD, notary Justus de Caesteker, inv. 1018, 18 October 1742.

⁴⁵ The will he and his spouse made in 1747 points in the same direction. As was the case with his parents, in 1742 the total value of his estate did not exceed 4,000 guilders (GAD, notary B. van der Star, 1 August 1747).

⁴⁶ Maris van Sandelingenambacht, *Een honderdtal Nederlandsche families*, 291–92.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 250–51.

⁴⁸ *De Nederlandsche Leeuw* 80 (1963) 396.

⁴⁹ Abraham's name does not appear in the enrolment register of the Latin School in Dordrecht (GAD, curators of the Dordrecht gymnasium, inv. 94). Nor do his son Pieter

when he died in 1742 is apparent from the violent quarrels that erupted between the offspring of his first and second marriages. It was not until 1750, after Abraham Blussé's intervention, that the hatchet was finally buried and the 'costly legal proceedings' concluded.⁵⁰ According to his son Pieter, this successful attempt at mediation on the part of his father earned him 'the life-long love and respect of all his relatives and their children'. Indeed, Pieter had 'heard many conversations and testimonies to this effect'. It seems that his marriage to Cornelia enriched Abraham both socially and financially. In 1765, for example, Cornelia had enough money of her own to stand surety for him when he assumed the office of bookkeeper of the poor-relief fund of the Dutch Reformed Church.⁵¹ Moreover, the money that their son Pieter brought to his marriage with Sophia Vermeer came from an advance on his share of his mother's inheritance.⁵² For the time being, however, Pieter and Sophia's marriage was still up in the air. The guardians wanted more information before they would give their consent, so they were forced to continue their investigations.

Upbringing and Education

When he opened his autobiography with the remark that, after his birth on 3 July 1748, he was given a 'welcoming kiss' by his 'virtuous parents', Pieter Blussé was not, of course, writing from personal recollection.⁵³ Evidently in later years his parents did not fail to impress upon their eldest son how delighted they were at his birth. Even the rather unflattering portrait of Pieter as a baby and toddler must be second-hand. He was said to have been a slow and timid child. 'I was slow to develop at first: I learned to walk late and to talk even later, and this no doubt contributed to my

Blussé's autobiographical notes mention his father's education (GAD, BFA, inv. 11). In the preface to his collected poems *Iets dichtmaatigs* (1784), Abraham himself suggests that he was self-taught: 'these may contain some linguistic mistakes, for I never finished school' (Velthuizen, *Abraham Blussé*, 9). Regarding the education of his mother, Cornelia Vallaré, a remark made by Pieter Blussé in his autobiography informs us that she attended a boarding school in The Hague, where the mother of Pieter's Amsterdam master Loveringh had also been a pupil.

⁵⁰ See GAD, BFA, inv. 11, autobiography of Pieter Blussé. The unsorted section of the Blussé family archive (GAD, box 2) contains a notarial act drawn up between the two parties on 28 April 1750.

⁵¹ On 27 December 1766 she agrees to stand surety for the sum of 6,000 guilders (GAD, Oud stadsarchief 1572-1795, Register van beambten en comptabelen, inv. 1940, fol. 24 verso).

⁵² GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 1, notarial act dated 9 September 1775.

⁵³ GAD, BFA, inv. 11.

shyness and over-sensitivity.' Apparently it was customary in the Blussé family to tell stories about their childhood years, such as the fairly detailed account of a 'bad accident' that befell Pieter at the age of seven, while staying with relatives in Dirksland. He probably drew upon his own recollections in describing the accident itself: he broke his right arm, for reasons that are not clear, while standing with his cousin in a 'green forecourt'. Pieter possibly also remembered the rather rough mode of transporting the sick in Dordrecht, recalling the carriage that fetched him, 'full of pain and distress', from the boat. The remarks of the physicians, whose names he recorded in full sixty-five years after the event,⁵⁴ must have been gleaned from his parents, however: 'Both of them considered my condition alarming, and thought that any delay would cause the onset of gangrene.' This tale of young Pieter being saved in the nick of time must have enlivened many a family gathering. The children born after Pieter were less fortunate.

Pieter's sister Geertruida, two years his junior, lived only a fortnight,⁵⁵ and his little brother Frans, born when Pieter was three, survived a mere two years.⁵⁶ Another brother, Adolph, born the year Frans died, did not live to adulthood either: he died of tuberculosis at the age of thirteen.⁵⁷ The deaths of his children inspired Abraham to write elegies for them, and the older the child was when he or she died, the greater his outpouring of grief. The poems commemorating the deaths of Geertruida and Frans, which seem to have been inspired by H.C. Poot's *Op de doot van mijn dochtertje* (On the death of my little daughter)⁵⁸, are perfectly in keeping with the prevailing Christian norm of resignation and restraint, since children who died young were thought to be chosen 'for a more noble destiny'.⁵⁹

O Truitje, barely had you opened up your eyes,
And scarcely had we heard your cries,
Scant nectar you had sucked from your dear mother's breast,
Before the Lord saw fit to wrest
You from us, leaving in our arms the body whole
That once contained your soul.
Why could you not remain on this earth still?

⁵⁴ Mr Van Steenberghe and Dr van Esch.

⁵⁵ GAD, burial register of the Augustine church in Dordrecht, 1 April 1750.

⁵⁶ A. Blussé, *Dichtkransje op de uitvaart van myn zoontje François Blussé* (n.p., n.d.) (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 42).

⁵⁷ GAD, burial register of the Augustine church, 20 May 1767. His illness is described by his brother Pieter in his autobiographical notes.

⁵⁸ See Velthuisen, *Abraham Blussé*, 21-22.

⁵⁹ R. Dekker, *Childhood, Memory and Autobiography in Holland* (London 1999) 133.

Perhaps you lacked the will?
 No, when at God's command the angels did descend
 To keep you in the end,
 Smitten, you flew, through God's charity and love,
 With them to heaven above.⁶⁰

Little Frans was two years older than his sister Geertruida when he, too, succumbed to the deadly temptation to fly heavenward with the angels:

His rosy cheeks they softly stroked and kissed,
 uttering sounds of bliss:
 And although my proud heart cries
 To see the innocence in his eyes,
 And observe his youthful gaze
 Looking on our worldly ways,
 But me he would forsake,
 And of better days partake,
 Flying in the angels' wake.⁶¹

If Abraham now seems less inclined to resignation than when two-week-old Geertruida died, the death of thirteen-year-old Adolph prompted a poem in which the comforting message—'You know that what God does is right ... Be silent and reverently still ... it was the Almighty's will'—comes after three heart-rending pages of verse recalling this promising lad.

But however much I grieve and cry, alas! You hear it not,
 Nor see the tears shed by your sister and brother,
 Nor know the sighs of your tenderly loved mother.⁶²

Abraham's grief was nothing compared with that of his contemporary Pieter de la Court, who, after the death of his young son, immediately packed his bags and went to Paris, filled with thoughts of suicide.⁶³ De la Court, too, refused to allow his grief to conform to the orthodox model of Philippe Ariès and Lawrence Stone, who maintain that the bitter reality of those times—when one in four children did not live to see their second birthday, and half of all those born died before reaching adulthood⁶⁴—prevented parents from becoming too attached to their children. In their view, it was

⁶⁰ A. Blussé, *Opvaart van mijn dochtertje Geertruida Blussé* (n.d., n.p.) (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 42).

⁶¹ A. Blussé, *Dichtkransje op de uitvaart van mijn zoontje François Blussé* (n.d., n.p.).

⁶² A. Blussé, *Lykzang op het verscheien van mijn zoontje Adolph Blussé* (n.d., n.p.) (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 42).

⁶³ Dekker, *Childhood*, 134.

⁶⁴ On the basis of the ego-documents he has studied, Dekker concludes that as many as one in three children died before the age of one (Dekker, *Childhood*, 127).

not until some time in the nineteenth century, when infant and child mortality began to decline, that bonds of affection between parents and their children were allowed to grow unchecked.⁶⁵ The stories about his early childhood that Pieter 'recalled' in 1822 suggest that his parents had a 'modern' attitude towards child-raising. Pieter's boyhood was thought sufficiently important to be retold in later years; indeed, the description of the character traits he displayed as a baby testify to his parents' interest in his individuality. This was in keeping with the growing awareness of childhood as a separate and, as regards character formation, particularly important stage in a person's life. It is no coincidence that the eighteenth century became the century of enlightened educational theory, in which parents and prospective parents were bombarded with educational treatises inspired by John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

That Abraham Blussé was among the eager readers of such treatises is apparent from the introduction to the pedagogical treatise *De beste opvoeding der jeugd ten nutte van dit Gemeenebest* (The best education for youth for the benefit of this Republic),⁶⁶ which he wrote in 1776 to submit to an essay contest of the same name, held by the Hague literary society *Kunstliefde Spaart Geen Vlijt* (Love of Art Spares No Pains).⁶⁷ In years past Abraham had 'diligently' studied, for the purpose of educating his own children, 'the most useful handbooks available in our language', but now he thought the time was ripe to present his newly acquired knowledge on this subject to a wider audience.⁶⁸ This rhyming treatise gives us, indirectly, an idea of Pieter's upbringing, so we would do well to examine it closely.

⁶⁵ Abraham's grief at the death of his children, which was correspondingly more acute the older they were at the time of their death, is more in keeping with the results of Linda Pollock's research. After analysing one hundred diaries, this representative of the revisionist movement of family history concluded that there was no change in the mourning process between the sixteenth and the nineteenth century. She did, however, notice less emotional involvement with infant deaths than with the deaths of older children (Dekker, *Childhood*, 128). While Pollock suggests that parental love is timeless, the historians Peter and Carol Stearns take a more nuanced approach. They admit that emotions are subject to change, but because they consist of bio-psychological constants, they change more slowly than the norms and values of a particular society. See D. Haks, 'Continueit en verandering in het gezin van de vroeg-moderne tijd' in H. Peeters, L. Dresen-Coenders and T. Brandenburg (eds.), *Vijf eeuwen gezinsleven* (Nijmegen 1988) 31-56, 47.

⁶⁶ A. Blussé, *De beste opvoeding der jeugd, ten nutte van dit Gemeenebest en bespiegelingen bij een onweder* (Dordrecht, 1776) in GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 42.

⁶⁷ See J.J. Kloek, 'Letteren en landsbelang' in F. Grijzenhout, W.W. Mijnhardt and N.C.F. van Sas (eds.), *Voor Vaderland en Vrijheid. De revolutie van de Patriotten* (Amsterdam 1987) 81. The second prize was awarded to Pieter van Braam (*Rotterdamsche Courant*, 6 July 1775).

⁶⁸ Blussé, *De beste opvoeding*, III.

Abraham's treatise, a step-by-step description of the education of young Bato—'an apprentice for the beloved fatherland'⁶⁹—contains many of the enlightened ideas common in the eighteenth century.⁷⁰ Locke's image of the child as a 'tabula rasa', a blank page that could be 'corrupted' by bad influences,⁷¹ must have made a lasting impression on Abraham, his Dutch publisher.⁷² When little Bato reaches the age of four and his questions begin to drive his tutor to distraction, Abraham thinks the time has come:

To impress by my instruction something good upon his heart,
Inasmuch as he's receptive: a child's capacity for thought
Is like soft wax, in which an image can be wrought
Of what is moulded or imprinted on it by our noble art.⁷³

The unconstrained, playful education Rousseau advocated, which in later years would be elaborated upon by the philanthropinists in their experimental schools, is also found in the rhyming writings of Abraham Blussé: 'Alternating conversation with a children's game, I'm careful not to overtax his mind and thus cause pain.' The games, too, are carefully chosen for their variety:

Now I give to my young son a wooden horse and cart
And other things so he can spend his days learning the art
Of happy play, and thus I change the game from time to time,
For variation fuels desire, and higher he will climb.⁷⁴

Abraham was probably influenced not so much by the original writings of Rousseau as by the Dutch pedagogue Kornelis van der Palm: 'Those who wish to educate children and have a dislike of their playful friskiness,

⁶⁹ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁰ See, for instance, W. Los, 'De travestie van de moraal: deugd en ondeugd als uitingen van mannelijkheid en vrouwelijkheid in het achttiende-eeuwse burgerlijke pedagogische discours?', *De achttiende eeuw* 27 (1995) 141–51.

⁷¹ B. Kruithof, 'Opvoedingsadviezen van Cats tot Beets. Continuïteit en verscheidenheid', supplement with *Documentatieblad werkgroep achttiende eeuw* (symposium Doesburg 1982) (1983) 169–79, esp. 173.

⁷² The second Dutch edition of John Locke's *Over de opvoeding der kinderen* appeared in the years 1766–68 in a number of Abraham Blussé's lists (specified as 'printed with copy-right'). See, for instance, J. Barueth, *Letterkundige brieven* (Dordrecht 1768) ex. KB 3025 C 21. In Blussé's 1779 catalogue of antiquarian books (*Alphabetische naamlyst van boeken* [Dordrecht 1779]), this second edition is given as an Amsterdam publication of 1755, so it was probably acquired from another publisher. This tendency, which was widespread among eighteenth-century publishers, to exchange publications is discussed in Chapter Four.

⁷³ Ibid., 12.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 11.

should assume a different task, and never try to increase or improve children's understanding.⁷⁵ A bit further on in his treatise Abraham does in fact acknowledge his indebtedness to this pedagogue, as well as to H.A. Chatelain and A. Hulshoff: 'Their general design deserves great honour everlasting: to their wisdom I surrender my small bit of learning.'⁷⁶ Hulshoff's ideas are, in fact, an unmistakable ingredient of Abraham's outline of a step-by-step education that corresponds closely to the child's stages of development and the system he devised of positive rewards. 'Through instruction I can teach his tender hand to write / And turn, by giving small rewards, his weakness into might.'⁷⁷ Abraham also quoted copiously from the advice given by the German pedagogue S. Formey, who advocated the careful observation of children in order to gauge their development with a view to working out educational strategies suited to each individual child: 'Formey prescribes, and I obey / Observing him from day to day.'⁷⁸ The last source of inspiration which Abraham specifically mentions is a book he published himself, written by J. Ballexsert, in which the swaddling of babies is condemned in no uncertain terms.

From an early age, Bato is given every chance to develop into a man sound in body and mind. His mother suckled him with 'the milk of liberty' and did not 'retard his growth ... did not oppress her infant with swaddling clothes and whalebones'.⁷⁹ As soon as he was able to leave the cradle, he was urged to seek the benefit of the open air. 'If indeed, in open air, the child learns to breathe free / Exuberantly it will grow, its limbs soon stronger be.'⁸⁰ Despite this continual emphasis on the importance of a natural upbringing, Abraham never mentions the name of Rousseau in this piece of writing. Nor is little Bato given anything like a 'free' education. Unlike Rousseau's Emile, from whom obedience is not required, Abraham's pupil is skilfully drilled: 'Nonetheless I keep him meek, by means of wise constraint / And playfully he learns his ABC without complaint.'⁸¹

⁷⁵ Van der Palm is quoted in R. Verwoert, 'Kindbeeld en pedagogiek in de Nederlandse Verlichting', *Comenius* 23 (1986) 318-41, esp. 337.

⁷⁶ Blussé, *De beste opvoeding*, 14.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ One year after the publication of *De beste opvoeding der jeugd*, Blussé's publishing house brought out a work by J. Bonnaud, translated by Pieter Leuter, which compares such child-care practices with being tortured on the rack. See [J.] Bonnaud, *Bederving van het menselijk geslacht, door het gebruik der baleinen keurslijven* (Dordrecht, 1777) (GAD, library, no. 114.830).

⁸⁰ Blussé, *De beste opvoeding*, 10.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

In Abraham's treatise we are repeatedly confronted with a combination of freedom and discipline that may appear confusing to readers of the twenty-first century. For instance, little Bato is thoroughly pre-programmed to grow into a man who can be counted on to act as follows: 'coercion to disdain / and fearlessly to hate all slavish chains'.⁸² Abraham believed that teachers would find fertile ground only when their pupils 'had grasped the purpose of learning', which must be 'impressed upon the child's mind ... through toil and effort'.⁸³ And even though Abraham seems to advocate the freedom of children to choose their occupation, this vocation and the training preparatory to it must accord with the 'class or condition or rank' of the citizen-to-be: 'And thus the youth are led by various ways / To learn skills that earn them honour and praise.'⁸⁴

The precise nature of training suitable to one's social standing is not clear, however. Abraham concentrates on the education of middle-class youth. His typical pupil is meant to acquire experience by 'taking every turning' in order to obtain knowledge 'in many branches of learning': 'By the shortest route I put him on the trail / Of learning Greek and Latin in few years' travail'. His 'appetite for the living languages' should also be encouraged, as should a desire for knowledge of the Bible and Dutch history.⁸⁵ Unfortunately, only the last-mentioned area was worked out in any detail, probably with an eye to the national perspective required by the essay contest. The last four pages were reserved for a brief history of the Netherlands, discussing at length the duke of Alva and his 'cruel hatred', the heroic William the Silent and the courageous Kenau Hasselaar, who defended Haarlem against the Spanish. Despite this appeal to patriotic sentiment, Abraham's treatise failed to win a prize. Nor did any of the other fourteen entries, because their authors had neglected to point out 'that which distinguishes a true Dutchman from all other peoples'.⁸⁶

The important question now is to what extent Abraham actually put his educational theories into practice: in other words, how much of a 'little Bato' was Pieter in his youth? It would be easier to answer this question if Pieter had died at a tender age, like his brother Adolph, since Abraham describes in detail in the *Lykzang* written for his youngest son the capacities of this 'promising' youth, who tirelessly read in Latin and Greek 'with

⁸² Ibid., 17.

⁸³ Ibid., 13.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 15.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 17.

⁸⁶ Kloek, 'Letteren en landsbelang', 81.

passion undisguised', to savour 'the language of the wise'.⁸⁷ Although Adolph did not 'clearly show that inclination', Abraham nevertheless thought he detected in his son a 'passion for learning' and particularly an interest in matters theological. Abraham claims that he tried to influence his son as little as possible, but whenever Adolph asked him to reveal his 'objective', he invariably received the same reply:

First take this road until the end, my son!
Then we shall see the path we'll next go down,
But rest assured, to you the choice I'll give,
I'll be content if only you can live
As a useful citizen and Christian.

This may well be a more practical version of the guided career choice Abraham advocated, but his system of positive encouragement also appears to have been used on Adolph:

Your diligence I then repaid
With yet another little gift,
Gave you encouragement and aid
In the pursuit of Letters with unflagging industry,
I said one wins the Palm of Honour with tenacity.

Even Abraham's description of his last walk with his son, which he recalled with great sorrow—when Adolph was 'released from pain, yet still with slight distress, he once again plucked tender blooms' with him in the garden—is pervaded with the enlightened eighteenth-century notion of beneficial outdoor air and pedagogical rambles.

Given these attempts to raise Adolph with the best of pedagogical principles, it is likely that Pieter's upbringing was also taken consciously in hand. Abraham's programme for little Bato conjures up a nursery land flowing with (mother)milk and honey: comfortable clothing, outdoor games, body-strengthening exercise (according to well-tried Batavian methods), an assortment of modern toys, and an attentive father always willing to answer the countless questions posed by curious children. After the age of six, however, this children's paradise began to take on less heavenly aspects. Its playful side gradually disappeared, making way for lessons in 'the noble crafts and skills and a variety of subjects'. Love of learning was stimulated by fostering ambition and by handing out rewards in the form of small presents. A close eye was kept on a child's 'heart and passions', so

⁸⁷ This and the following quotations were taken from Blussé, *Lykzang op het verscheien van myn zoontje Adolph Blussé* (n.d., n.p.) GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 42.

that his or her individual inclinations and ambitions could be guided and corrected. And finally, parents gave a lot of thought to their children's education and training, attaching great importance to 'living languages' and Dutch history, but also allowing for the study of Latin and Greek 'by the shortest route'.

The practical implications of this somewhat cryptic scheme become clear if we examine Pieter's education. It appears that Abraham's short-cut to learning classical languages was a very pragmatic solution to what was becoming an ever greater dilemma for the eighteenth-century bourgeoisie. To be sure, the Latin school and its classical education offered their sons the necessary baggage to move in learned circles and the higher echelons of society, but it failed utterly when it came to instruction in modern languages, commercial knowledge and arithmetic.⁸⁸ Although the French schools did include these subjects in their curriculum, they were not allowed to teach Latin and Greek.⁸⁹ Thus merchants and tradesmen tended more and more to turn their backs on the Latin schools in favour of the French schools.⁹⁰ For the larger booksellers—who required knowledge of business, bookkeeping and modern languages, but also sought some of their clientele and their manuscripts in the Republic of Letters—the problem was even more complicated. Abraham therefore seems to have made a compromise that enabled his son to enjoy the best of both worlds: Pieter attended both the French and the Latin school, but completed only half of each course of education.

Between the ages of eleven and thirteen, Pieter attended the French boarding school run by Egidius Timmerman in Woudrichem, a village near Dordrecht.⁹¹ A school brochure published in 1786, a quarter-century after

⁸⁸ E.P. de Booy, *Kweekhoven der wijsheid. Basis- en vervolgonderwijs in de steden van de provincie Utrecht van 1580 tot het begin der 19e eeuw* [= *Stichtse Historische Reeks* 5] (Zutphen 1980) 123.

⁸⁹ In the last decades of the eighteenth century it looked as though a solution had been found for this dilemma, namely the founding of Latin/French schools. These schools were relatively expensive, however. See W. Frijhoff, 'Van onderwijs naar opvoedend onderwijs. Ontwikkelinglijnen van opvoeding en onderwijs in Noord-Nederland in de 18e eeuw' in *ibid.*, *Onderwijs en opvoeding in de achttiende eeuw* (Amsterdam 1983) 3-39, 10.

⁹⁰ The dramatic decline in the number of pupils at the Latin schools in the Dutch Republic is discussed in Frijhoff, 'Van onderwijs naar opvoedend onderwijs', 19ff. Regarding the same tendency in Dordrecht, see *ibid.*, 'Crisis of modernisering. Hypothesen over de ontwikkeling van het voortgezet en hoger onderwijs in Holland in de 18e eeuw', *Holland. Regionaal historisch tijdschrift* 17 (1985) 37-56, esp. 42, Graph 1; Van Dalen, *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht*, 910.

⁹¹ He claims this in his autobiography (GAD, BFA, inv. 11).

Pieter was a boarder there, says that the curriculum consisted of Dutch, French, religion, reading, writing, arithmetic and—if the parents were prepared to pay an additional 25 guilders annually—bookkeeping.⁹² The decision to send Pieter to this school must have been taken with due consideration, because there were several less expensive French boarding schools closer to home.⁹³ It is possible that Pieter benefited from several of the objects that Abraham had inherited from his parents, such as the ‘silver spoon and ditto fork’,⁹⁴ since Egidius accepted partial payment in kind of the 150-guilder fee. Every boarder was obliged to donate to the school a silver fork and spoon, six good table napkins and two plates.⁹⁵ Pieter was so enthusiastic about this school that years later he sent one of his own sons to Woudrichem. By then he was much wealthier than his father: not only could he afford to send nine-year old Abraham to boarding school, but two years later he paid for his full-time enrolment at the Latin school. Pieter claimed that he ‘could not resist the temptation’ to send his son to study the classics, since he was convinced of the ‘benefits accruing to those who possess even partial knowledge of Latin’.⁹⁶ In other words, the education received at the Latin school was mainly considered the icing on the cake. The knowledge that really counted had to be acquired elsewhere. Indeed, Pieter himself, in his day, had received—in addition to his two years at the Latin school—instruction in ‘religion, drawing, English and German’. His so-called spare time was not spent in idleness either:

I was interested in everything my dear parents considered good for me, and my father intended me, from an early age, for the book trade. To this end, I was encouraged in my spare time and during the holidays to copy letters and bills, and to fold and even to bind books. I particularly enjoyed this last task and other physical activities.

In practice, little remained of the freedom Abraham claimed to give his

⁹² C. Esseboom, *Onderwysinghe der jeught. Onderwijs en onderwijstoezicht in de 18e eeuw op het Eiland van Dordrecht* (Ridderkerk 1995) 308.

⁹³ The school in Woudrichem might have been so appealing because it taught bookkeeping, which was rather unusual in the eighteenth century. In his dissertation Esseboom could not confirm whether this subject was taught at the French school in Dordrecht, but he did state that there were several teachers in Dordrecht who gave lessons in bookkeeping, either at their schools or privately, at the pupils’ homes. The teachers he names, however, were not active when Pieter Blussé sent his children to school in Woudrichem (Esseboom, *Onderwysinghe der jeught*, 314).

⁹⁴ GAD, notary J. de Caesteker, inv. 1018, 18 October 1742.

⁹⁵ Esseboom, *Onderwysinghe der jeught*, 308.

⁹⁶ GAD, BFA, inv. 11.

children in their choice of career, but at least he succeeded in raising a son who accepted his lot with alacrity.

It is possible, however, that Pieter was a born book dealer. His enthusiastic reports of his father's business lessons contrast sharply with his comments on school life. Pieter's allusion to the 'other physical activities' he enjoyed so much certainly does not seem to refer to the display of strength needed to outdo his fellow pupils: 'Although slower to understand than most of my fellow pupils, I nevertheless managed, by working hard and paying attention, to keep up with—if not to surpass—many of them.' It may well have been Pieter's diligence and 'docile nature' which prevented him from 'participating in the usual lechery of youth' and helped him to win the affection of his teachers, so that in September 1763, only two years after his enrolment, his name was struck from the list of pupils with the comment 'valedixit musis': 'he bid the Muses farewell'.⁹⁷ If we base our assessment of Pieter's character on his own account—even his childhood memories of learning 'to walk late and to talk even later'—the picture emerges of a well-behaved, ambitious and hardworking lad, though a bit slow and over-sensitive, and not exactly quick-witted. He was probably a much more practical child than his brother Adolph, whose unquenchable thirst for knowledge led Abraham to think that he had sufficient talent to study, perhaps even to become a clergyman. Adolph's death at the age of thirteen must have come as a great blow. Not only did Abraham's expectations go up in smoke—it was decades before his eldest grandson gave him renewed hope—but his plans to expand his business were thus cruelly crossed.

By apprenticing Pieter at the age of sixteen to an Amsterdam publisher and training Adolph himself in his own business in Dordrecht, Abraham had hoped to expand the firm by opening a branch in Amsterdam. Pieter described this ambition in his autobiographical notes as follows: 'Early on my dear parents had nourished hopes of establishing me in Amsterdam, while they intended a younger, promising brother as my father's successor, thus furthering and expanding mutual trading contacts.' When a place was found for Pieter with the well-known but sickly Amsterdam publisher Jacobus Loveringh—whose mother had run the boarding school in The Hague that Pieter's mother had attended—the

⁹⁷ GAD, curators of the Dordrecht gymnasium, inv. 94, fol. 15ff.

future seemed to smile on both Abraham and his sons.⁹⁸ The first days were not easy, however.

Pieter's parents accompanied their son to Amsterdam and installed him (with the 'necessary household effects') in a small upstairs room in a canal-side house on the Prinsengracht. After introducing him to some of their Amsterdam 'friends and acquaintances', they said their 'very emotional' goodbyes and left for Dordrecht, leaving Pieter behind feeling homeless and uprooted: 'And there I stood, at the beginning of my life, not yet seventeen, utterly alone and left to my own devices.' Fortunately for Pieter, he could start work straightaway: 'With a glad heart I embarked on my new career. I was diligent in performing the tasks required of me and soon earned the trust of my employer and his spouse, so that they soon confided to me the running of the shop.' That this rather great responsibility had to be shouldered by a sixteen-year-old youth fresh from the Latin school, who had chiefly acquired his practical experience in the book trade during school holidays and in his free time, was a result of the rapidly worsening condition of his master, who availed himself of this opportunity to let someone else take care of his business. 'My master was a good but very corpulent man, who had worn himself out doing sedentary work such as typesetting and now suffered from severe gout and chest complaints. Because of my help, he was able to spend more time in the open air and would go more often to stay at his country house in Sassenheim.' In the first winter after Pieter's arrival in Amsterdam, when Loveringh suffered a severe stroke that left his entire right side paralysed, Pieter was 'promoted to head of the book dealership and the publishing house'.

Little time was left for socialising. The people Pieter talked with most were the two carriers, Van der Kemp and Van Eymeren, who journeyed back and forth between Amsterdam and Dordrecht, delivering parcels and letters for his father. They were probably the ones who delivered the letters Pieter wrote 'almost daily' to his father, telling him about new projects in the publishing world or inexpensive consignments of books. Loveringh attempted to rescue Pieter from this isolation by introducing him to two boys his own age, but his plan backfired. These boys, the proud occupants of a room in Kalverstraat, turned up their noses at Pieter's 'humble abode' in a baker's house on the corner of Prinsengracht and Tuinstraat, nor did they like the neighbourhood in which it was situated. They managed to

⁹⁸ Jacobus Loveringh's mother, Johanna Groen, did indeed live in The Hague, as is apparent from Jacobus Loveringh's banns. I thank Hannie van Goinga for providing the information (GAA, registers of banns [1701-50], 6 March 1733).

persuade their new friend—who was apparently easily influenced—that his room was unsuitable, if only because of his dependence on the landlady, a former servant of Mrs Loveringh, ‘who was the confidante of his employer’s wife’. They convinced Pieter that a recently vacated room in their house would be ‘better and more fashionable’. Pieter decided to take their advice, but not before he had asked his parents’ permission and begged them to persuade his employer of the importance of this move. Evidently Abraham, despite his willingness to oblige Pieter in both respects, did not succeed in the second part of the task, for Pieter reports that as a result of ‘this story’ he incurred the wrath of Mrs Loveringh.⁹⁹ And to what purpose? He soon found himself in the midst of a battle between his landlady and her tenants, and ‘became involved in the disputes and bickering, taken to extremes, whereby both the landlady and the *contubernaes* tormented one another’. But Pieter, always eager to learn, managed to derive some benefit even from this rather annoying situation, saying: ‘It taught me a lesson.’

A couple of years later he had another useful learning experience, this time with his assistant and initial successor in Loveringh’s bookshop, whose total lack of interest in the bookselling business was compensated for by his talent for acting: ‘He could repeat his profession of faith like the best catechism teacher, and recite the roles of the most capable actors like a first-class master.’ He is described in Pieter’s autobiography as an evil genius who tried—without much success—to tempt Pieter into straying from the straight and narrow: ‘Alas! That unfortunate young man was a spoiled child. More than once he attempted to drag me into his trap—but God protected me and I escaped his clutches with the loss of 28 guilders, which he managed to wheedle out of me with promises and threats.’ Although the young man was the son of a Mennonite professor and had already spent six years working for an eminent bookseller, things were bound to end badly for him: ‘He was sent first to debtors’ prison and from there to a warship, where he soon died in poverty.’

Pieter had happier memories of his contact with three Amsterdam societies: the lectures on geography and physics given by Mr Bosma, the Latin classes given to a group of students by a French Jesuit named Hubert, and the ‘society of young gentlemen who met at the home of Mr Stallard, lay reader at the English church’. Pieter was especially enthusiastic about

⁹⁹ This was Maria Blom, Loveringh’s second wife (GAA, registers of banns, 30 April 1751).

the last-mentioned society, where he received reading and conversation lessons and could polish up his English ‘while enjoying the most delicious punch’. ‘It was also this society that held a cordial farewell supper ... on the eve of my departure.’ But it was not with a heavy heart that Pieter said goodbye in 1769 to that ‘bustling city, where everything favoured prosperity and pleasure’, since he was homesick for Dordrecht. ‘Even though everything in Amsterdam was smiling on me, I was always plagued by doubts about the future.’ He would much rather live and work in his native city. When his brother died, therefore, he did not wait long to inform his parents of his secret desire, and begged them to let him come home when his apprenticeship with Loveringh was over, to work in his father’s business. This ‘they now readily permitted’, but they did not want to let Loveringh down, so they made every effort to find a suitable successor, who—after the unhappy intermezzo starring the swindler-cum-actor—turned out to be the confectioner’s journeyman Johannes Allart. This son of a clergyman from Overijssel was destined, only a few years after Pieter had trained him before leaving for Dordrecht, to take over Loveringh’s bookshop and become, in a short time, the biggest and most enterprising—but also the most notorious—bookseller in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic.

Status, Wealth and Connections

The Status of Booksellers as a Professional Group

If things had turned out differently—if Pieter had not become homesick for Dordrecht and his younger brother had not died—would it have been Pieter Blussé and not Johannes Allart who emerged as the king of the Dutch publishing world? After all, Pieter had been dealt the same cards as Allart, and before leaving Amsterdam he had been Loveringh’s business manager and designated successor. But did he possess the same business acumen and talent for innovation? At the end of his long career as a book dealer and publisher—with Allart forever in the background as his life-long competitor—Pieter was the first to affirm the talent of his former pupil and successor:

Although very young and completely new to the profession, he was so diligent and alert that when I left, he was able not only to take over the daily running of the business but also to carry on and expand it. After only a few years, Allart became first a partner and subsequently the owner of Loveringh’s publishing house. It is well known how he excelled as a bookseller.

However, Pieter was not wholly enthusiastic about this enterprising businessman. Allart would have been more successful, Pieter glumly went on to say, if he had been 'more level-headed, less avaricious and more scholarly'. If that had been the case, he would have rivalled such famous predecessors as 'Tirions, Meyers, Wetsteins, Blauws, Luchtmans, Van der Aa and others'. As Pieter saw it, a publishing house, to be truly successful, had to be more than just profitable. His list of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dutch publishers renowned for their typography clearly shows that he also felt the nature of the printed matter and the way in which it was marketed to be major considerations. This raises an important question and one that would have interested Sophia's guardians as well, namely the status of book dealers in the eighteenth century. For even without the subtle standards by which booksellers, and possible others too, distinguished the upstart plebeians from the educated entrepreneurs, it is difficult enough for outsiders to get a clear idea of where publishers stood on the social ladder in the eighteenth century.

Book dealers belonged to the group of self-employed entrepreneurs whose incomes—unlike those of wage labourers or civil servants—are difficult to estimate on the basis of their profession alone. There were, in fact, huge differences in the incomes of self-employed professionals. The incomes of small tradesmen and retailers, such as peddlers and shopkeepers, were generally no higher than those of unskilled labourers in Dutch cities, that is to say, 200-250 guilders a year.¹⁰⁰ The world of the eighteenth-century book dealer included both 'odd-jobbers'¹⁰¹—dealers in paper and writing materials, as well as a few steady-sellers and the occasional pamphlet—and big-time entrepreneurs, booksellers-cum-publishers on the scale of Johannes Allart, whose stock and printing business were sold after his death for more than 200,000 guilders.¹⁰² Contemporaries, too, such as the author of *Een boek per inval* (A book for every idea) of 1792, were keen-

¹⁰⁰ L. Noordegraaf, 'Sociale verhoudingen en structuren in de Noordelijke Nederlanden 1770-1813', *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* X (1980) 369.

¹⁰¹ This characterisation comes from Brouwer, *Lezen en schrijven in de provincie*, 65. H.J. van Leusen distinguishes three categories in his study of the book market in Middelburg. See H.J. van Leusen, *Bouwstoffen voor een geschiedenis van de boekhandel van Walcheren 1780-1815* (unpublished master's thesis, Utrecht University, 1987) 74-95. L. Boots, in her prosopographic study of seventeenth-century booksellers and printers in Gouda, concludes that there was a high degree of heterogeneity among this group (I thank L. Boots for allowing me to read part of the dissertation she is writing on this subject).

¹⁰² T. Broos, *Lijst van boek- en plaatwerken uitgegeven door of in samenwerking met Johannes Allart* (Amsterdam 1979) 6.

ly aware of these differences. This author attempts to present the entire spectrum of the Amsterdam book trade, advising his readers to visit all the Amsterdam bookshops, 'from Mr ALLART to the WED. VAN EGMOND' (a publisher of blue books).¹⁰³ Based on the income stratification employed by De Vries and Van der Woude, the majority of book dealers—along with a large number of their fellow tradesmen, the shopkeepers—can be put into the low income category or just above that, in the broad middle class.¹⁰⁴ Book dealers do not appear in the list drawn up by these two authors of the fifteen professional groups with the highest average incomes,¹⁰⁵ and booksellers occur only occasionally in the lists compiled in the French era of the top one hundred taxpayers.¹⁰⁶

It is misleading, however, to link the status of professional groups to their average income alone. Other factors, such as the cultural networks in which people operate and the type of work they do—clean or dirty, manual or mental—also play a role.¹⁰⁷ Thus we find that book dealers differ in a positive way from other members of the middle class when it comes to active participation in the cultural life of the community. After all, among the members of the eighteenth-century literary societies studied by C.B.F. Singeling, the only shopkeepers to be found are those who run bookshops. Together with 101 merchants, 8 brokers, 3 apothecaries, and 5 members of other professions, 21 booksellers—one of whom was Abraham Blussé—

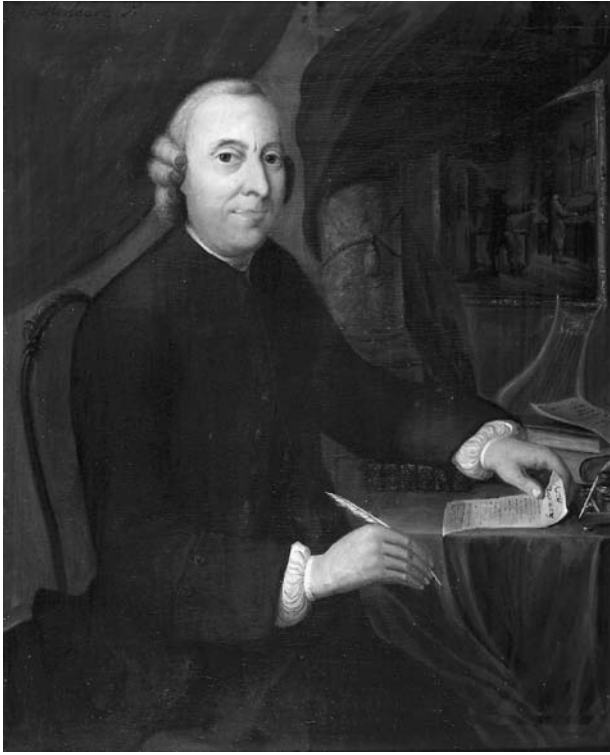
¹⁰³ T. Broos, 'Misdruk en mispunt: Johannes Allart (1754-1816) II', *Spectator* 11 (1981-1982) 212-23, esp. 216. Van Egmond's firm was well-known as a publisher of chap-books (popular stories, ballads, etc.). See R. Beentjes, '... En de man hiet Jan van Gyzen. Een verslag van twaalf jaar lief en leed in Jan van Gysens Weekelyksche Amsterdamsche Merkuuren (1710-1722)', *MJCW* 17 (1994) 1-15. On this and similar publishers, see A. van den Berg, *Hier komt Urbanus bij een hoer. Volk en volkslectuur in de achttiende-eeuwse Amsterdamse Nes* (Amsterdam 1993).

¹⁰⁴ De Vries, Van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy*, 701.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 688. This list contains nine professional groups working in government circles, as well as merchants, soap-boilers, brewers, lawyers, sugar-refiners and cloth-sellers.

¹⁰⁶ Booksellers do not figure on Amsterdam's list of one hundred individuals who paid the highest taxes, nor on the list of top taxpayers in Middelburg, a much smaller and poorer city. There is one bookseller, however, on the list of 's-Hertogenbosch. See L. van Nierop, 'De honderd hoogst aangeslagenen te Amsterdam in 1813', *Economisch Historisch Jaarboek* 11 (1925) 1-76; A. Mulder, 'De honderd hoogst aangeslagenen te Middelburg in 1812', *Economisch Historisch Jaarboek* 17 (1931) 81-116; H.F.J.M. van den Eerenbeemt, *'s-Hertogenbosch in de Bataafse tijd 1794-1814. Bijdrage tot de kennis van de sociaal-economische structuur* (Nijmegen 1955) 262.

¹⁰⁷ For a critical discussion of the term 'status', see G. Groenhuis, *De predikanten. De sociale positie van gereformeerde predikanten in de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden voor 1700* (dissertation, Groningen University, 1977) 44.



2. Portrait of Abraham Blussé Sr, painted in 1773 by J. Holaert, oil on canvas. Museum Mr. Simon van Gijn, Dordrecht. Blussé is portrayed writing his poem 'Mozes zegezang', published in 1784 in his collection of poems *Iets dichtmatigs*.

represented the sector of trade and industry.¹⁰⁸ However, there are no other indications, apart from their earnings, of a higher social standing than the booksellers' incomes would suggest. It is possible that because of the 'inspired' nature of their merchandise, booksellers—operating in the grey area between commerce and culture—had an edge over other members of the middle class in the same income bracket. But until socio-historical research is carried out into the status of book dealers compared with that of other professional groups, the claim of I.J. Brugmans—namely that

¹⁰⁸ C.B.F. Singeling, *Gezellige schrijvers. Aspecten van letterkundige genootschappelijkheid in Nederland, 1750-1800* (Amsterdam 1991) 194-95. See also G. Schulte Nordholt's extensive study, which outlines the Netherlands' cultural public in the period 1770-1800. His findings list thirty-two booksellers, compared with only eight shopkeepers selling other kinds of wares (with thanks to Gerard Schulte Nordholt).

the aura traditionally surrounding Dutch tradesmen meant that nineteenth-century book dealers, together with wine merchants, were among the 'few sorts of shopkeepers' who belonged to the 'upper class'—is both unsubstantiated and premature.¹⁰⁹

Up to now Brugman's assertion has been applauded mainly by proud representatives of this professional group, such as the nineteenth-century book dealer and publisher Kruseman, whose motto was: 'Bookseller-Publisher—no profession more serious'.¹¹⁰ Or the anonymous eighteenth-century book dealer who, in a 1775 issue of the journal *De Koopman* (The Merchant), laments the supposed decline of his profession, 'which in truth ought to be given pride of place among all trades, as it is in other countries'. The publishers Samuel Luchtmans and Cornelia van Musschenbroek, husband and wife, also seem to have been aware of the value of their trade when, in about 1750, they had themselves portrayed as Mercury, god of commerce, and Minerva, goddess of wisdom and the arts, surrounded by portraits of their authors and copies of their most important publications.¹¹¹ In his poem to Abraham Blussé, the Leiden bookseller Cornelis van Hoogeveen Jr emphasises the same combination of culture and commerce, though he formulates it in a more down-to-earth way:

O Blussé, we love the art of poetry, and fain
To seek, through printed words, both honour and financial gain.¹¹²

A year later, when Abraham wrote an encomium to the art of book production in Cornelis van Hoogeveen's *album amicorum*, he did not hesitate to express pride in his profession, which he praised variously as the 'foster mother of genius', 'fount of virtue', 'caretaker of God's word', 'bringer of joy', 'mainstay of wisdom' and even 'help unto all humankind'. Such appellations cannot possibly describe a trade, but—as its name suggests—an art, and standing at the cradle of the art of book production was its renowned inventor: Laurens Coster of Haarlem:

¹⁰⁹ His tenuous evidence for this is based on the estate of the extremely wealthy bookseller Blikman of Amsterdam, who died in 1854. See I.J. Brugmans, 'Standen en klassen in Nederland gedurende de negentiende eeuw', in P.A.M. Geurts and F.A.M. Messing eds, *Economische ontwikkeling en sociale emancipatie* (2 vols; The Hague 1977) II, 110–28, esp. 115.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in H. Brouwer, 'De vele geschiedenissen van het boek', *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse boekgeschiedenis* 1 (1994) 1–24, esp. 1.

¹¹¹ H. Fuhri Snethlage, *In het licht van het lezen. De rol van het boek in de beeldende kunst* (Zwolle 1992) 72.

¹¹² The poem, dated 2 January 1768, was written for Abraham Blussé's *album amicorum* (which he kept from 1755 to 1803); GAD, BFA, inv. 6.

The noble art of PRINTING BOOKS strives for the common weal,
 And demonstrates in this endeavour ceaseless toil and zeal;
 Old Haarlem rightly prides itself on KOSTER for the part
 He admirably played in the invention of this art.¹¹³

It is possible that Pieter Blussé was inspired by this song of praise when, years later, he had his portrait painted by the artist G.A. Schmidt, who portrayed him with a self-assured smile, a book in his left hand, pen and ink within reach, and a bust of Laurens Coster staring sternly over his right shoulder.¹¹⁴ That Coster's fame was used more often to lend cachet to the trade and its practitioners is also evidenced by a 1663 portrait of the seventeenth-century municipal printer of Haarlem, Abraham Casteleyn. In contrast to Pieter, he poses with his wife, but he too is accompanied by a bust of the reputed father of the art of printing.¹¹⁵

It is not possible, of course, to draw any general conclusions from these random findings about the status and self-awareness of book dealers, since we would first need to carry out systematic research into many more portraits of booksellers, comparing them to other professional groups. Did carpenters, for instance, have their portraits painted with hammer and chisel in hand? Were bakers immortalised holding a loaf of bread? Are there portraits of wine merchants flanked by a barrel of wine and the god Bacchus? More knowledge is also needed as to the purpose of such portraits. Should they be seen as an attempt to distinguish themselves from the practitioners of other trades, or were they intended to impress their fellow booksellers? Were such portraits made only of successful book dealers with a comprehensive and impressive list of publications to their name? Or did relatively unknown publishers also have themselves portrayed in this way? In any case, it is clear that Pieter Blussé did not belong to this latter category when he posed for the artist Schmidt in around 1800. In Pieter's eyes, the bust of Coster must have been doubly significant, as the representative both of the trade's venerable tradition and of Pieter's own bookshop, which, after all, had been founded by his father in 1745 under the name of Laurens Coster. When the portrait was painted, many years after he had married Sophia, Pieter had much to be proud of. As a grey-haired old man, he could

¹¹³ A. Blussé, *Mengeldichten* (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 42).

¹¹⁴ See the picture on the cover of this book. The undated portrait, attributed to G.A. Schmidt, is in the collection of the Simon van Gijn Museum in Dordrecht (IB no. 32778).

¹¹⁵ The portrait is reproduced in L. Hellinga-Querido and C. de Wolf, *Laurens Janszoon Coster was zijn naam* (Haarlem 1988) 83.

look back on a long and successful career as the publisher of such prestigious works as the fourteen-volume *Nederlandsche reizen tot bevordering van de koophandel* (Dutch journeys made to promote commerce) of 1787 or the twenty-four-volume *Volledige beschrijving van alle ... ambachten* (Complete description of all trades and occupations), which began to roll off the press in 1788. But in 1770 he could not yet bring such achievements to bear when trying to impress Sophia's guardians. Where did the publishing firm of A. Blussé & Son stand in the 1770s on the sliding scale of publishing houses, with firms of international repute at the top and, at the bottom, the odd-jobbers and small businesses for which they worked?¹¹⁶

The Firm of Abraham Blussé, 1745-1770

The earliest records of Abraham Blussé's activities as a book dealer date from 1743, in which year he ordered—even before opening his shop—seven small inexpensive volumes from Luchtmans, a wholesale bookseller in Leiden, as well as a work of great importance to book dealers, J. van Abcoude's *Naamregister of verzaameling van Nederduytsche boeken die zedert de jaaren 1640 tot 1741 zyn uytgekoomen* (Register or compilation of Dutch books published between 1640 and 1741). It was a while before he made much use of this reference work, because for the next few years he ordered only a few books, mostly of a religious nature. Given the number of book dealers in Dordrecht in 1743, the market must have been saturated. In addition to Abraham Blussé, the city had nine active booksellers,¹¹⁷ most of whom were either so poor that they were exempt from paying the poll tax levied in 1742,¹¹⁸ or else were put in the lowest tax bracket.¹¹⁹ Two exceptions were Johannes van Braam, the predecessor of Abraham's and Pieter's later competitor Pieter van Braam, and the Bible printer Jacob Keur. On a scale of one to sixteen, they were placed in the fifth and sixth tax brackets, respectively.

Johannes van Braam's somewhat stronger position was probably due in

¹¹⁶ Brouwer, *Lezen en schrijven*, 65.

¹¹⁷ This number is based on the records of Gruys and those of Ledebuer, as well as on information obtained from the printers' register in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek and from the *quotisatieregister* of 1742 (ARA, Rekenkamer ter auditie, inv. 28). Abraham Blussé does not appear in the latter register, presumably because he was still living in his father's house, which was however registered.

¹¹⁸ ARA, Rekenkamer ter auditie, inv. 28. This register does not list the Dordrecht booksellers Jan van Kamen, Josua van Vliet and Joannes Bonket.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. This applies to Frederik Outman, Adriaan Walpot, Jan Georg Wittig and Huijbert Collaert.

part to his privileges. Not only did he hold sole rights to the printing of the city almanac, but he had also been appointed municipal printer, a position from which he evidently derived a substantial income.¹²⁰ To gain a rough idea of what this meant, we must go both backwards and forwards in time. After Johannes's death in 1751, his nephew and successor, Pieter van Braam, assumed this position for the not inconsiderable sum of 300 guilders,¹²¹ but it must have been worth the investment. In 1798, at the request of the town council, Pieter Blussé initiated an inquiry into Pieter van Braam's annual income from this source and from his deliveries of writing materials to the town council, to which he had also acquired the rights. Pieter consulted an extract from Van Braam's accounts for the year 1794 in which these deliveries were recorded as adding up to 338 guilders. The post of printer and supplier to the Gecommitteerde Raden van het Zuiderkwartier (the council that administered the 'South Quarter' of the province of Holland), which Johannes van Braam had acquired in about 1750, was even more lucrative. Thus J. van Braam's heirs received, over the period 1750–51, a total of 3,000 guilders, and the goods delivered in 1754 alone were valued at 3,031 guilders, 35 stivers and 8 cents.¹²² Only after 1795 was this system of protectionism and inherited municipal offices questioned and revised—Pieter Blussé having contributed to these changes in a rather ambivalent way—but before that time such rights and privileges were important to a bookseller's success. In 1764 Abraham Blussé had the good fortune to acquire the rights to a large delivery service, although it could scarcely compete with Van Braam's privileges. Blussé, in fact, became the permanent supplier to the Dordrecht school for poor children. If we take a good look at the course of events leading up to this appointment, it is clear that favouritism played only a small role: Blussé obtained the post largely as a reward for his good conduct.

In November 1764 Blussé appeared, together with a master-smith named Jan Spruijt Jr, before the church council of the Dutch Reformed community in Dordrecht, to testify against one of the teachers at the local parish school, a certain Master de Gorder, who had been accused of fraud. Abra-

¹²⁰ See *Nederlands Patriciaat* 63 (1977) 38–45. On the status of this office, see A. van Alten, 'Het Utrechtse boekbedrijf rond 1800. Een aanzet tot reconstructie', *De negentiende eeuw* 14 (1990) 2–3, 133–46, esp. 136. She emphasises that holding this office was a prerequisite 'to rising above at least the regional level'.

¹²¹ Asserted in Pieter Blussé's letter of 2 February 1798 to the town council (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 60).

¹²² ARA, Archive 3.01.05 for the years 1752–94. I thank Ton Jongenelen, who kindly let me read his notes on this subject.

ham Blussé declared before the court that the schoolmaster had asked him (three years previously, as emerged from De Gorder's later statement) to supply him with a 'large quarto Psalter'. Although intended for his son, a 'junior teacher at the parish school for the poor', it was to be put on the bill for 'the delivery of school supplies, but under another entry, delivering that much less, but billing that much more, to cover the exact cost of the Psalter'.¹²³ Jan Spruijt's statement is even more incriminating. Apparently De Gorder regularly made purchases intended for the schoolhouse—'door hinges, an organ pedal, some nails'—which were then deducted from the church fund for poor relief. When the smith attempted to convince the schoolmaster of the 'dishonesty of such dealings', he received only empty promises and threats. To top it all, as Spruijt revealed to two committee members after the hearing, De Gorder presented the following argument: 'Old chap, you still have no idea how the world must be governed, because if you insist on acting in this way, you'll never get on in the world.' This lesson in life was to prove mistaken, for after his case was heard De Gorder was sent home 'with a severe punishment and a serious recommendation that he refrain from all such irregular activities, under pain of losing his post', whereas the smith was rewarded for his 'faithfulness and honesty' with an appointment as a regular supplier.¹²⁴ A number of meetings later, Van der Star—for many years the Blussé family's notary—tried to undo the wrong done by this appointment by arguing before the church council that it was only right that Abraham Blussé, too, should be rewarded for his good services. The church council found this fair, and thus 'resolved to make perpetual use of Blussé as bookseller to the Church'. The following year Abraham was also appointed bookkeeper of the church poor-relief fund.

In fact, Abraham Blussé no doubt profited far more as a book dealer from two hereditary posts: the position of collector for the Generality's lottery,¹²⁵ which he possibly inherited in 1764 from his cousin Johan Blussé, and the position of postmaster which, as mentioned above, he inherited

¹²³ GAD, Archive of the Dutch Reformed Church, church council, inv. 24, 5 December 1764, fols. 248-54. The following quotations were also taken from this source. I thank Cees Esseboom for drawing my attention to this case.

¹²⁴ GAD, Archive of the Dutch Reformed Church, church welfare, inv. 111, (1791) fol. 99. Mr A. Blussé reminds the meeting of the church welfare committee of their resolution, passed in 1764, to appoint his firm as permanent supplier.

¹²⁵ Johan Blussé (1711-1764). In a notarial act of 1751 he is mentioned as 'collector for the national lottery and accredited money-changer in Dordrecht' (GAR, ONA, inv. 3892, 1 October 1751, fol. 1078). A deed of purchase dated 1784 reveals that Abraham Blussé was his heir (GAR, ONA, notary Woutherus Prill, 19 July 1784).

from his great-grandfather, Pieter Blussé. Both offices, which could easily and profitably be combined with the business of bookselling, presumably led to increased sales. The rights to the carrier service that involved delivering letters and parcels to Amsterdam, at that time the undisputed heart of the book trade in the Dutch Republic, undoubtedly benefited his social and distribution networks, and the accompanying privilege of 'sending letters and parcels free of charge' could easily have been taken in Blussé's case to include the free shipment of books from Amsterdam to his Dordrecht bookshop.¹²⁶

Another advantageous move was Abraham's decision to join an association, founded in 1753, of Dordrecht book dealers whose aim it was to buy collectively books with and without copyright and privileges. This type of partnership, especially among small book dealers, was fairly common in those days. By joining forces and making joint purchases, even entrepreneurs with a relatively small turnover could take advantage of the quantity discounts given at auctions of unbound books.¹²⁷ Abraham's partners were the Dordrecht booksellers Jacobus van der Vijle, Hendrik de Koning, Josua van Vliet and Jacobus van Hoogstraten.¹²⁸ The detailed contract—which contained thirty-one clauses and was drawn up by a notary—proves that this was no gentlemen's agreement. Just as in the trade guilds and societies, fines were imposed for arriving late or not turning up to the meetings held once every four months.¹²⁹ If one of the partners failed to pay what he owed for books delivered from the collective depot, he was charged interest and prevented from acquiring any more books until he had paid off his debt. If he remained in arrears for more than eight months, the other partners could vote to expel him. The company even took measures to prevent fraud by giving the bookkeeper—in 1753 Abraham Blussé—a counter-bookkeeper, in this case Josua van Vliet. Further precautionary measures included double locks on the depot door, with each bookkeeper in possession of only one key, so that 'neither one could enter without the other also being there'. Unfortunately, the only information we have about

¹²⁶ In those days the recipient paid the postage.

¹²⁷ H. Furstner, *Geschichte des Niederländischen Buchhandels* (Wiesbaden 1985) [= *Geschichte des Buchhandels* 2] 63. See also I.H. van Eeghen, *De Amsterdamse boekhandel 1680-1725* (5 parts in 6 vols; Amsterdam 1961-1978) V 68. This probably does not refer to a publishing firm. There are no joint expenses on record, nor is there any reference to the conditions governing joint publications.

¹²⁸ GAD, notary Bax, inv. 1055, 26 September 1753.

¹²⁹ On intra-society regulations, see W.W. Mijnhardt, *Tot heil van't menschedom. Culturele genootschappen in Nederland, 1750-1815* (Amsterdam 1987).

dates from 1766. It was published jointly with Loveringh's firm and supervised by Pieter's Amsterdam teacher of geography and physiology, Benjamin Bosma.¹³⁰ It appears that Pieter was not exaggerating when he stated in his autobiographical notes that he made use of his position as apprentice (starting in 1765) to the Amsterdam publisher Loveringh to promote his father's book business. 'While working for my master, I did not lose sight of my father's activities. I wrote to him almost daily, and it was my privilege to be of service to him in the matter of buying and selling.'

A similar upward curve can be observed in the deliveries from the firm of Luchtmans to Blussé's bookshop in the period 1743-71.¹³¹ The balance sheets show both the growth of this Dordrecht book dealership and the increasing importance of his list. As the blank spaces on the balance sheets show, in the early years Abraham was unable to bill Luchtmans for any goods, but from 1771 onwards there appears to have been a more balanced exchange between the two firms, and by the end of that year, Luchtmans had to pay the difference for the first time.¹³² The sales accounts of Luchtmans's firm testify to the increasing financial stability of Blussé's business in the late 1760s. In 1769 it appears that Blussé and six other large booksellers in the Dutch Republic—Luchtmans, Van der Eyk, Van Paddenburg, Van Esveldt, Loveringh and Schouten—were the joint owners of a work titled *Verklaring van de geheele H. Schrift door Patrik, Polus en Wels en andere Godgeleerden* (Exegesis of the complete Holy Bible by Patrik, Polus and Wels and other theologians). Blussé, whose sales of the book amounted to 4,839 guilders, was in fact one of the largest retailers.¹³³

The picture is confirmed by the recent study undertaken by H. van Goinga, who deduced a pecking order among booksellers from the number of advertisements they placed in newspapers over several years. In the rankings based on the advertisements appearing in the *Leydse Courant* in 1770, the firm of Abraham Blussé & Son, with twenty-six advertisements,

¹³⁰ See the publisher's lists for 1765 and 1766 in the Appendix.

¹³¹ VBBB, Archive of the firm of Luchtmans, sales accounts 1743-60, 1770-71.

¹³² Ibid. In the years 1743-45, Luchtmans delivered 90 guilders' worth of books to Blussé, while Blussé delivered nothing in return. Between 1746 and 1769, Luchtmans delivered twice as much to Blussé (99 guilders' worth) than Blussé did to Luchtmans (52 guilders' worth). In the period 1770-71 the balance was approximately the same: Luchtmans delivered 245 guilders' worth of books to Blussé, and Blussé 246 guilders' worth of books to Luchtmans (the amounts are rounded off to whole guilders). It should be noted, however, that some of these deliveries might have involved returned goods sent on consignment, which could distort the picture. The important part is not exact sales figures but tendencies in the flow of trade.

¹³³ H. van Goinga, "Alom te bekomen". Veranderingen in de boekdistributie in de Republiek 1725-1770', *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse boekgeschiedenis* 3 (1996) 55-87, esp. 81.

shared fifth place.¹³⁴ For the same year Van Goinga compiled a list of the top sixteen booksellers based on their stock lists, and here, too, Blussé ended up in fifth place, with forty-six advertisements. He was in good company, for his leading competitor, Pieter van Braam, was also listed forty-six times.¹³⁵

The Blussés' Social Standing

Over the years Abraham's financial position also improved. In 1747 the total value of his assets did not exceed 4,000 guilders,¹³⁶ but in 1768 a notary estimated his fortune at 20,000 guilders,¹³⁷ a large part of which no doubt represented the value of his bookshop and inventory. A balance sheet drawn up by his son Pieter in 1774 reveals that his father had acquired 'the shop and all its contents, bound and unbound books' in 1771 for the sum of 8,788 guilders and 14 stivers.¹³⁸ The upward curve can also be seen in the taxes paid to bury various Blussé children who died young. Although none of them was ever considered poor enough to receive free burial, until well into the 1760s they were taxed in the lowest category. This applied to Abraham's deceased brothers and sisters, as well as to his daughter Geertruida, who died in 1750, and his son Frans, who died in 1753. When his son Adolph died in 1767, Abraham suddenly appears to have been in a higher category, since he was charged 6 guilders in burial tax.¹³⁹

It is tempting to assume that the flourishing business of Abraham Blussé & Son was responsible for the increasing prosperity of the Blussé family, but we must take into account the possibility that the improvement in the family's financial situation was due to another branch of industry entirely: the plumbing business owned by Abraham's only brother, Adolph. This master plumber, who was fairly well off and had provided his younger brother with the capital necessary to start up his bookshop, died childless

¹³⁴ H. van Goinga, *Alom te bekomen. Veranderingen in de boekdistributie in de Republiek 1720-1800* (Amsterdam 1999) 43.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 100. Eight of the top sixteen booksellers were also publishers and wholesalers (as ascertained by Van Goinga). 'Of these eight, De Groot, Luchtmans, Van Paddenburg and Blussé are among the really big publishers/wholesalers who also own or have shares in major publications' (*ibid.*, 117).

¹³⁶ GAD, notary B. van der Star, 1 August 1747. The value might actually have been greater; it was in people's interests to declare the lowest possible amount.

¹³⁷ GAR, notary Herbert van der Meij, inv. 2210, 11 August 1768.

¹³⁸ GAD, BFA, inv. 100, box 1.

¹³⁹ GAD, DTB, burial tax received, inv. 4, index 39.3 and 39.4.

in 1761.¹⁴⁰ His widow, Cornelia Adriana Roels, could not enjoy her inheritance for long, because she died a few months after her husband.¹⁴¹ No will drawn up by this couple has been found, but it is fairly certain that Abraham, if not the sole heir, was among the legatees. Considering Adolph's earlier generosity in providing his brother with financial backing, and his closeness to his young nephew Pieter—which the latter stresses in his autobiographical notes—we may assume that there were warm relations between the two families. Indeed, sixty years after the fact, Pieter vividly recalled, with tears in his eyes, his uncle's deathbed:

I was the darling of this virtuous and God-fearing man; many a time had his hand guided my faltering steps. Tender affection made me deeply attached to him. When he felt that his end was near, he entreated me to kneel down at his bedside. Raising himself up, he gave me his blessing, like the Patriarch. Dear departed uncle, I thank you for all your love and affirm our bond by shedding a tear.

It was also in the 1760s that Abraham attained a position in the church. In 1762 he was first appointed to the office of deacon in the Dutch Reformed Church, a post he held repeatedly in the following years.¹⁴² From 1765 to 1769 he also acted as bookkeeper for the church poor-relief fund.¹⁴³ That he was fond of these 'poor Lazaruses' is clear from a poem he dedicated to them titled *Bijlschrift in de kamer der diakonen* (Remark in the deacons' chamber):

Though poverty weighs on you heavily
And you are lacking more than nourishment:
Think always of your Saviour, verily
Cry only if your sins you must lament,
For your salvation is God's firm intent.¹⁴⁴

As useful as the deacons were in supporting their less fortunate brothers and sisters—the devout Tabithas and praying Corneliuses¹⁴⁵—it is quite

¹⁴⁰ A tax of 15 guilders was paid for his burial, which was the second-highest tax category (GAD, burial register of the Augustine church, 5 January 1761).

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 26 January 1761.

¹⁴² He held this office from 1762 to 1764 and from 1766 to 1769. In the years 1766-68 he was also accountant (GAD, Herenboekje, 1754-63, 1764-73).

¹⁴³ GAD, Oud stadsarchief 1572-1795, inv. 1940.

¹⁴⁴ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 42, *Mengeldichten* (a number of unbound printed quires). This verse still graces the parish notice board in the front portal of the Augustine church in Dordrecht. See A. de Boon, *Augustijnenkerk Dordrecht. Bakermat van kerk en staat* (n.p., n.d.) 7.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.



4. Jean-Etienne Liotard, *Profile Portrait of Pieter Blussé*, 1756, crayon. Museum Mr. Simon van Gijn.

clear that elders were higher than deacons in the church hierarchy.¹⁴⁶ It would be several decades before Abraham was considered eligible for such a function, when the Patriot movement propelled him up the social ladder. The same was true of his son Pieter: although he was appointed deacon as early as 1772,¹⁴⁷ it was not until 1787 that he rose to the position of elder and district superintendent.¹⁴⁸ These two triumphs—undreamed of in 1770, when he was courting Sophia—will be discussed in Chapter Three. What is of importance here is Pieter's appointment to the post of ensign

¹⁴⁶ See J.C. Streng, "'Tot maintain van de souvereiniteit en het hoge gezagh van de overigheid'. De regenten en de gereformeerde kerk te Zwolle tijdens het ancien régime', in P.H.A. Abels, J.L. Admiraal, G.N.M. Vis et al. (eds.), *Bouwstenen tot de kerkgeschiedenis van Noord-West Overijssel* (Delft 1995) 175-93, esp. 179-81. It was uncommon for a deacon to rise to the position of church elder. In Zwolle no more than about 25% of the deacons eventually became elders. Election to this position was seen as a great honour, particularly by the middle classes.

¹⁴⁷ GAD, Herenboekje 1772, 54. In the same period he probably also acted as bookkeeper for the church poor-relief fund. One of Pieter Blussé's balance sheets from 1773 contains the entry '328:15:-' (328 guilders and 15 stivers), which he gave as an advance to the parish poor-relief fund (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 1).

¹⁴⁸ GAD, Herenboekje 1787, 55-56.



5. Pen and brush drawing (1768) by the well-known book illustrator Reinier Vinkeles in the *Album amicorum* of Abraham Blussé Sr. Dordrecht Municipal Archives.

in the Dordrecht civic militia, with which he was honoured in August 1769, only a few months after his return from Amsterdam. His farewell gift from Loveringh, his former employer—a sword with a silver hilt¹⁴⁹—was immediately put to good purpose, since civic militiamen had to buy their own arms. Only well-off citizens, therefore, could afford to belong to such a corps. It is known that a number of towns in the province of Holland safeguarded the standard of their militias by requiring of their militiamen a minimum fortune,¹⁵⁰ and forcing impoverished members to resign.¹⁵¹ The regulations in Dordrecht were possibly more flexible, which would explain why Pieter gained a place in the militia's upper echelons. After all, members of the officers' corps—colonels, provosts, captains, lieutenants, sergeants and ensigns—were generally recruited from the urban elite, to which the

¹⁴⁹ This sword, which has withstood the ravages of time, is still among the family heirlooms.

¹⁵⁰ In Gouda and Haarlem the amount was 600 guilders. See P. Knevel, 'De kracht en de zenuwen van de Republiek. De schutterijen in Holland, 1580-1650' in M. Carasso-Kok and J. Levy-van Halm (eds.), *Schutters in Holland: kracht en zenuwen van de stad* (Zwolle 1988) 36-54, esp. 40.

¹⁵¹ Such criteria were imposed in Delft and Haarlem (Carasso-Kok, 'Der Stede scut', 27).

Blussés certainly did not belong in this period.¹⁵² That this honourable post also had its less pleasant side emerges from the complaint Pieter voiced in a letter he wrote to Sophia in 1771: 'Tonight I have to keep watch again at the Town Hall. Oh, if only I could guard you instead, how happy I should be.'¹⁵³

The portrait painted in 1756 by the artist Etienne Liotard of eight-year-old Pieter only adds to the confusion surrounding the Blussés' social standing in the period preceding 1771.¹⁵⁴ As a sitter, Pieter found himself in the princely company of such notables as Ludwig Ernst, Duke of Brunswick, George III, Crown Prince of England, Maria Theresa, Empress of Austria, and his contemporary, Prince William V of Orange, the last stadholder of the Netherlands, whose portrait Liotard painted in 1756.¹⁵⁵ Pieter's portrait was probably made as a favour, since Liotard had close ties to an acquaintance of the Blussés: the Walloon clergyman Jean Louis Maizonnet of Dordrecht.¹⁵⁶ The connection between the two families is also evidenced by the marriage in 1799 of Pieter's eldest son to this clergyman's only daughter.

Some of Abraham's other social contacts can be gleaned by reading his *album amicorum*, which, with one exception, contains contributions from the period 1755-1775.¹⁵⁷ The book includes poems by widely differing individuals: Johannes Badon, burgomaster of Vlaardingen; the Amsterdam engraver Reinier Vinkeles; Gijsbert Versteeg, sheriff of Ridderkerk; the Amsterdam sugar-refiner and playwright Johannes Nomsz; the composer Bartholomeus Ruloffs, likewise from Amsterdam; the Rotterdam pawnbroker and poet Jacob Kortebrant; Willem van der Jagt, a merchant of Maassluis; the Dordrecht bookseller Jan van Hoogstraten; Cornelis Brooshooft of the Hague, principal chief collector of the excise tax on wine; the Leiden bookseller Cornelis Heyligert; Ernst Zeydelaar, head of an Amsterdam boarding school; and Ahasverus van den Berg of Dordrecht, a theology student.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵² Carasso-Kok and Levy-van Halm, *Schutters in Holland*, 200.

¹⁵³ GAD, BFA, inv.10, letter of 30 April 1771.

¹⁵⁴ This portrait is still in the family. There is a copy in the Dutch Iconographic Bureau (no. 32776).

¹⁵⁵ See F. Grijzenhout, *Liotard in Nederland* (Utrecht 1985) 114, 83, 105-06.

¹⁵⁶ A. Staring, *Fransche kunstenaars en hun Nederlandsche modellen in de 18de en in den aanvang der 19de eeuw* (The Hague 1947) 30; F. Grijzenhout, *Liotard in Nederland*, 162, 166.

¹⁵⁷ GAD, BFA, inv. 6. Carin Slot wrote her master's thesis on this album, researching and discussing many of its contributors. See C. Slot, 'Uijt suivere vriendschap'. *The album amicorum of the Dordrechtse bookseller Abraham Blussé* (unpublished thesis, Leiden 1995).

¹⁵⁸ The professional groups mentioned more than once include seven booksellers, two Protestant ministers, five students from various disciplines, five tradesmen, two sheriffs, two burgomasters and two mathematicians.

Abraham moved in several social circles and his network was certainly not limited to the city of Dordrecht. Of the fifty contributions to his *album amicorum*, only thirteen were penned by fellow townsmen—the others were written chiefly by natives of Rotterdam, Leiden, Amsterdam, The Hague and Vlaardingen. It can hardly be a coincidence that, with the exception of Vlaardingen, these were the very places where Abraham ran a carrier service. The fact that Abraham was a member of various literary societies in these same cities—Studium Scientiarum Genitrix (Diligence Brings Knowledge) in Rotterdam, Kunst Wordt Door Arbeid Verkregen (Art Is Obtained Through Work) in Leiden and Kunstliefde Spaart Geen Vlijt (Love of Art Spares No Pains) in The Hague—suggests a connection between his social network and his carrier service,¹⁵⁹ although the facts do not bear this out entirely. Forty percent of those who wrote in his album were indeed members of literary societies, but many of their contributions date from a time when these societies had not yet been founded.¹⁶⁰ It is possible that these societies already existed informally, and Abraham came into contact with them through his own membership of one of the first literary societies in the Dutch Republic—Concordia et Labore—founded in 1754 in Dordrecht.¹⁶¹

This four-man society—whose other three members were the Papendrecht clergyman Bernardus Elikink, the theology student Ahasverus van den Berg and one Justus de Bruyn¹⁶²—is known for its 300-page volume of poetry, *Proeve van zedepoëzie* (Samplings of moral poetry),¹⁶³ published in 1755 by Abraham Blussé. The society's priority, as stated in the introduction to this book, was two-fold: edification and the composition of verse 'according to the rules of the art of poetry'.¹⁶⁴

That Abraham's enthusiasm for edification through poetry was not limited to his contributions to books produced by literary societies is evidenced by the notes he scribbled to his son. He thus honoured Pieter, dur-

¹⁵⁹ He was a member of SSG in 1778-80 and 1785-89; his membership of KWDAV ran from 1772 to 1785 and he participated in KSGV during the period 1772-80 (Singeling, *Gezellige schrijvers*, 264).

¹⁶⁰ Slot, *Uijt suivre vriendschap*, 13, 22.

¹⁶¹ On this society, see Singeling, *Gezellige schrijvers*, 42; W. Frijhoff, H. Nusteling and M. Spies (eds.), *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht van 1572 tot 1813* (Dordrecht 1998) 362-63.

¹⁶² The only thing known about this Justus de Bruyn is that in 1746, at the age of twenty, he left Amsterdam and moved to Dordrecht, and he remained a bachelor all this life. See E. de Rooij, *Door vele banden gebonden* (unpublished master's thesis, Amsterdam 1993) 44.

¹⁶³ Singeling, *Gezellige schrijvers*, 42.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

ing his stay in Amsterdam in March 1766, with numerous pieces of parental advice—‘always avoid lust like every sensible person’—cast in verse form and accompanied by a letter that begins in prose but ends in rhyme:

Of time well spent and labour you shan't tire
 Heroic virtue is thus recompensed
 Good sons will emulate your excellence
 Mere harmless doves an eagle cannot sire.¹⁶⁵

Blussé's pen even contrived to give a poetic twist to so prosaic an event as paying off a debt:

Pay your Sophia, my dear son,
 The fifteen guilders owed to me,
 And make up the remaining sum
 With money from the Lottery.
 The thirty guilders' debt all told
 I've crossed out as no longer owed.¹⁶⁶

This verse must have been written in around 1780, long after Pieter and Sophia married. Things had not progressed so far when Abraham wrote a poem to honour Sophia's birthday on 13 March 1771, quoting the poet Hubert Poot in an attempt to persuade Sophia to marry his son Pieter:

What use are roses if they never bloom?
 Things are praised because they are consumed,
 So earthly goddess, do not hesitate,
 Blussé's affection to reciprocate.¹⁶⁷

This brings us back to the beginning of the story: Pieter Blussé's courtship of Sophia Vermeer. In March 1771 Abraham had every reason to write a little poem encouraging Sophia to change her mind, because things were not looking so good for his son, even after—or perhaps because of—the research carried out by her family into the Blussés' background.

Although Sophia had meanwhile declared in her letters to Pieter that without him she had ‘neither joy nor contentment’, there was still no wedding in sight. The difficult negotiations of the pre-nuptial agreement that began in February 1771 suggest that the investigation carried out by Sophia's guardians into Pieter's background had done nothing to dispel their doubts about his suitability as a marriage candidate. After a long silence, they proceeded to make new proposals that were difficult for the Blussés to ac-

¹⁶⁵ GAD, BFA, inv. 7.

¹⁶⁶ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 45.

¹⁶⁷ GAD, BFA, inv. 7.

cept, and to raise objections to compromises already made. The course taken by these negotiations will be examined in detail in the next section. What is interesting at this point is to compare the results of our own research into Pieter's background with the evidently negative conclusions drawn by the guardians, and to admit that their doubts about a marriage between Pieter and their orphaned niece Sophia were—at least from an eighteenth-century perspective—not entirely unfounded.

The social status of Pieter's father, a self-made book dealer whose ancestors were artisans—thread-twisters and plumbers—was certainly not equal to that of Sophia's parents and other family members, who for generations had held posts in local government, which placed them, in eighteenth-century terms, several rungs higher on the social ladder. Furthermore, the males in the Blussé family had a tradition of marrying above their station. Perhaps Sophia's guardians did not take into account the possibilities Pieter's bookshop gave him to better his social position. As early as 1771, in fact, Pieter already held several trump cards, since he had been given a good training and had gained experience in the business, first with his father and then as manager of Lovering's firm in the book-dealing metropolis of Amsterdam. In 1771, when ownership of his father's firm was transferred to him, Pieter took possession of a flourishing business that had already established its name in the publishing world. Moreover, it was situated in a city whose geographical position was very favourable to the book trade: at the confluence of several large rivers and with the provinces of Zeeland, Brabant and Flanders in its hinterland.¹⁶⁸

Sophia's brother Johan Heinrich Vermeer, who honoured the Blussé family with a visit on 15 February 1771, seems to have been unimpressed by Pieter's prospects for the future. Disappointed, he reported to Sophia's other two guardians that Pieter had formed an unrealistic picture of the situation during his visit to Cleves, and this caused them to step up their delaying tactics. The guardians, however, underestimated both Pieter's perseverance and the important role played by the third actor in this play—their young niece Sophia. In the end, it was her impression of Pieter that was of overriding importance. Through the letters he sent her almost dai-

¹⁶⁸ An advertisement from 1760 confirms that Abraham Blussé traded with booksellers in the province of Brabant and in Flanders. In this advertisement he announces that people can now subscribe to F. Le Comte's, 'Cabinet of the arts of architecture, painting, sculpture and engraving ... at the aforementioned, most notable bookshops in the cities of the United Netherlands, as well as in Flanders and Brabant' (*Leidsche Courant*, 1760, no. 65).

ly, she got to know him in a completely different and more intimate way.¹⁶⁹ This unique source of information—publishers' love letters are extremely rare—gives us a good idea of Pieter's personality as well as a detailed account of the marriage negotiations. Their love story illustrates the problems that could arise in the eighteenth century when two persons of unequal standing insisted on marrying. The negotiations also left their mark on the firm of A. Blussé & Son, since they caused the business to be handed over from father to son years earlier than intended.¹⁷⁰

Letters to Sophia

An Imploring Monologue

Only a week after their first meeting on 2 September 1770, Pieter wrote his first love letter to his 'most worthy bosom friend'. He was a lovesick suitor—'not an hour or even a moment goes by without my lamenting our separation'—and at the same time a practical man. For instance, he did not attempt to conceal his main reason for writing to her: 'Do not think my writing too bold and the result of unthinking impertinence, but rather as a way of making you better acquainted with me and winning your love and respect.' He hoped, however, to win her over to the idea of marriage to the extent that in her letters to her guardians she would 'not show herself to be utterly indifferent' to the question of his 'eligibility'.¹⁷¹

The following letter likewise contains both lyricism and instructions.¹⁷² Pieter seems to have been inspired by his merchandise when he loses himself in poetic outpourings about the natural beauty of his surroundings: 'the gentle gurgling of hushed brooks and the wind playing on twigs and leaves ... while the lowing of woolly cattle fills me with sweet contentment'. But he was too lovesick to enjoy these Arcadian scenes any longer: 'Everything palls, everything upsets me, and nothing appears to me with its natural glow—for you, my beloved, are all I long for.' His heartache would be greatly relieved by a letter from Sophia, 'which would cling like virgin honey to the roof of my mouth'. But he had to write fifteen more letters,

¹⁶⁹ Similar love letters from the eighteenth century are rather rare (see Haks, *Huwelijk en gezin in Holland*, 136).

¹⁷⁰ For the long-term consequences of this, see the last section of Chapter Six.

¹⁷¹ GAD, BFA, inv. 10. The following quotations from the letters are all from this source, unless otherwise indicated. Hereafter only the date of the relevant letter will be given.

¹⁷² 4 September 1770.

begging unashamedly for a reply, before receiving a missive from his beloved.

As long as the guardians' standpoint remained unclear, Pieter continued to stress that their investigations of his character and fortune were bound to have a positive outcome, and that the continuation of their relationship would depend chiefly on Sophia's wishes: 'Provided your family may be assured that you love me and that I am not displeasing in your eyes, and provided they have thoroughly investigated my character and livelihood and have received satisfactory answers on that score, then no objections remain but yours.'¹⁷³ The extremely dispassionate letter from Uncle Heeking—stating simply that he had been informed of Pieter's interest in his niece and that, if the association continued, he would at some point 'have more to say on the subject'—was interpreted with excessive optimism by Pieter, who thought it 'confirmation of the idea that, after obtaining reports on my person, your honourable guardians will have the magnanimity to approve heartily of the continuation of our sacred bonds of friendship. So now it also depends on you, my dearly beloved SOPHIA! Direct your thoughts openly to me.'¹⁷⁴

Pieter also maintained that he was suffering from all kinds of physical ailments—symptoms of true lovesickness—to appeal to Sophia's emotions. 'My physician attributes my sickness to an excess of blood coursing through my veins and to the current high air pressure, but I blame it on the profound ponderings and reflections that constantly plague me because of you, my dearest. Your absence fills me with the greatest sadness, and since I have not received any letters from your loving hand I spend my days in the deepest melancholy and my nights in the most doleful dreams.' Halfway through this letter Pieter even maintains that he is so overcome with emotion that tears are running down his cheeks as he clutches his pen with cramped fingers. Forced to take a short break, he leaves a line blank before starting again to plead his case. Although he finds consolation in the thought that his soul's outpourings will provoke genuine sympathy in his Sophia and that sighs for his recovery are already escaping from her loving breast, he says he would derive far more comfort from words of 'consolation and encouragement', if only she would take the trouble to send him a letter. Such words would 'be a far more effective remedy than the most select medicines administered by the most experienced doctor'.¹⁷⁵ Sophia, how-

¹⁷³ 6 September 1770.

¹⁷⁴ 5 October 1770.

¹⁷⁵ 17 September 1770.

ever, did not flinch. Only a week later—after two more letters reporting that his ‘body and mind’ were so ‘weakened and exhausted’ that all he could do was spend his days in ‘quiet gloom’, the more so because he had not yet had a letter from her ‘dear hand’—which he hoped, however, to receive—did the object of his adoration begin to get worried. She did not write to the patient himself, however, but approached him indirectly by writing to his father.¹⁷⁶

Sophia was sensible enough to remain aloof as long as her guardians’ consent was not forthcoming, since at the age of seventeen she was still underage by eight years and thus still dependent on them. If she were to affirm her ties to Pieter without their permission—by writing to him, for example—there might well be financial repercussions.¹⁷⁷ She also had her reputation to think about. Too much involvement with Pieter and his family might make it difficult to break off their relations at a later stage.

That Pieter was well aware of Sophia’s dilemma emerges from a passage in one of his earliest letters, in which he assures Sophia that he will not make improper use of her written replies, ‘because I am free of that cowardice and meanness of spirit of which others are perhaps capable when they abuse or scorn courtesies shown them’.¹⁷⁸ Pieter’s fifteenth letter to Sophia—and the first to which she replied—reveals that he had tried repeatedly in previous letters to persuade her to act counter to their agreement, for she had apparently insisted on a period of ‘deeper reflection’, during which she would refrain from writing to him. When this period had elapsed, and her brother and guardian had given them permission to become better acquainted, Pieter reminded her of their agreement: ‘My dearest, tell me how long you will continue to deny me this privilege. Must your period of reflection be well and truly over?’¹⁷⁹ Her reply came by return post. For a month and a half he had been waiting for the day when he would lay eyes on a letter addressed in his beloved’s hand, but now that the moment of truth had come, he tore open the envelope to discover a single paragraph. Sophia had received his letter in good order and was happy to hear that his health was improving; she had also received a letter from her brother, and wanted to discuss its contents with him in person, provided his health continued to improve.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ This is clear from Pieter’s letter of 25 September 1770.

¹⁷⁷ See below in this chapter.

¹⁷⁸ 15 September 1770.

¹⁷⁹ 19 October 1770.

¹⁸⁰ 19 October 1770.

'Conversation'

Sophia thus began—cautiously at first, but then more and more boldly—to reply to Pieter's letters, and the 'conversation' that developed between them allows us to get to know her better. At the same time, however, part of their relationship remains hidden from view, for we cannot witness their encounters. The only picture we can form of these meetings must be pieced together from Pieter's melancholy reflections after the event. The invitation Sophia extended in her first missive did not fall upon deaf ears: Pieter must have set off for Rotterdam very soon after receiving her letter. One week later he was back in Dordrecht, writing to tell his beloved of his safe journey home and reflecting wistfully on their recent time together: 'Oh pleasurable memories, when I heard the best wishes for my health and safe journey coming from your sweet lips, and was privileged to receive the tenderest kisses.'¹⁸¹ That their contact had not been merely amorous but had also touched upon the matter of their marriage, and how and when this subject could best be broached with Sophia's guardians, can be inferred only by reading between the lines. Pieter tried to convince Sophia of the appropriateness of his actions when he announced that same week (much earlier than agreed upon) that he intended to visit her guardians:

Mistress of my soul, you are the aim of my journey, which we agreed upon. It is to go in person to your honoured guardians to lay open the means of my—and eventually your—livelihood, and assuming their fair and reasonable satisfaction, to obtain their wholehearted approval and blessing for the union and marriage plans we have already made. And because this is of the greatest importance to us I am reluctant to tarry, and have decided to undertake the journey so much earlier in order to tell you all the sooner, my dearest, of my happiness about your guardians' willing approval (for in no way do I despair of it), whereupon we would be free to continue with our blessed plans. And so I trust you will not wonder at my haste in making this journey.¹⁸²

Pieter's optimism about the outcome of the negotiations—he assumed that gaining the approval of Sophia's guardians was merely a formality—proved unjustified, for his hasty visit turned into a fiasco. This emerges not from the love letters—which mention no such visit—but from Pieter's autobiographical notes.¹⁸³ Writing years later, he still recalled with painful clarity the chilly reception he had received in Cleves. Indeed, if Sophia's

¹⁸¹ 26 October 1770.

¹⁸² 29 October 1770.

¹⁸³ GAD, BFA, inv. 10.

aunt, Mrs van Oven, had not intervened, Pieter would have been shown the door immediately, for the uncle who lived in Cleves, the above-mentioned 'elderly and dignified man', thought that Sophia and Pieter had 'gone too far' and wanted to 'rebuke his ward'. Luckily for Pieter, Sophia's aunt 'was of a gentler disposition', and she generously allowed Pieter to stay in her house: 'I stayed three days and thus had the opportunity to speak on several occasions with her less agreeable husband.'

Apparently these conversations did nothing to mollify Uncle van Oven. A month after his visit to Cleves, Pieter had still not received any letters from Zevenaer or Cleves, although he remained—at least in the letters to his beloved—completely confident of the outcome:

But no news is good news, my Sophia. If the friends had any objections or were dissatisfied with me in any way, they would not dare wait so long to tell us Clearly, they are reluctant to be over-hasty in encouraging our happiness to the full, and therefore wish to keep us in suspense a while longer. But this should not be a cause of worry to either you or me. Pure love has bound us, the majority of our friends and guardians rejoice in our union, and nothing will separate us or impede our blessed objectives.¹⁸⁴

The supposed happiness of the 'majority' of the guardians appeared to be nothing more than news of a letter written to Sophia by her brother a number of weeks later. Pieter concluded from this letter that Sophia's brother was 'completely' satisfied with him as a marriage candidate. Mr Hecking allegedly agreed as well. The guardians' consent could be blocked only by 'Mr van Oven, who wants to cross us for no good reason'.¹⁸⁵ The guardians' permission would remain in doubt until the very end. Meanwhile, Pieter and Sophia continued to exchange letters freely, without 'let or hindrance', as he later related in his autobiography, even though Sophia—perhaps taking warning from Pieter's rash departure for Cleves—tried from time to time to keep him in check.

Persuasion and Conviction

Whenever Pieter started to move things along too quickly, Sophia would gently slow him down. For example, his suggestion that they send their New Year's letters to Sophia's family together in the same envelope was firmly vetoed by Sophia,¹⁸⁶ who thought it 'better to send our New Year's

¹⁸⁴ 4 December 1770.

¹⁸⁵ 28 December 1770.

¹⁸⁶ 14 December 1770.

letters separately'.¹⁸⁷ Pieter's plan to present Sophia with a brand new Bible—when attending church together he had noticed that her copy 'was beginning to look worn through so much use', so he had ordered a new one for her¹⁸⁸—also met with resistance: 'I beg you not to, because mine is as good as new. I've only been using it for six months. It is possible that you are mistaken, for I should otherwise take advantage of your kind offer and give you my custom.'¹⁸⁹ She reacted impassively when Pieter expressed indignation at not being invited to her sister's wedding—'you must make your sister realise that she has done badly by not thinking of me'¹⁹⁰—just as she did several days later, when he offered his apologies after the invitation had finally arrived: 'You must excuse my misapprehension. I hope you hadn't already written about it to your sister.'¹⁹¹ As it turned out, Sophia had quietly ignored his earlier request and now told him so: 'I had not yet done what you asked, for it seemed to me that you were being hasty, and as it turns out, it's better that I didn't.'¹⁹² It is possible she adopted the same strategy when Pieter proposed that the two of them attend the baptism of Princess Louise, and therefore announced that he had already told his friends in The Hague that they could expect them around that time. He returned to this subject time and again in his letters, but Sophia never responded to the suggestion.¹⁹³ In fact, this joint excursion never took place.

Similarly, when Sophia did not ignore Pieter's many invitations to come and stay with his family in Dordrecht, she at least put him off with vague excuses for the trip's postponement. Such stalling happened, for instance, on New Year's Eve 1770, when she could have made the journey in the company of her brother-in-law Van Sprang, and Pieter had written: 'Come, dear Sophia, do it and make me happy with news of your visit on Sunday, or else surprise me even sooner with your arrival.'¹⁹⁴ And the same thing happened again, a month later, when Pieter extended another invitation, this time using his parents as an excuse, who, he said, felt very bad that they had 'never had the opportunity to see you here'. Pieter suggested the elderly Miss van Sprang as a chaperone, but if it did not please her to accompany

¹⁸⁷ 27 December 1770.

¹⁸⁸ 15 February 1771.

¹⁸⁹ 17 February 1771.

¹⁹⁰ 29 January 1771.

¹⁹¹ 2 February 1771.

¹⁹² 4 February 1771.

¹⁹³ 8 November 1770.

¹⁹⁴ 28 December 1770.

Sophia, then she could have no better travelling companion than her 'dear friend' Pieter.¹⁹⁵

Sophia's guardians were no doubt unenthusiastic about such overnight stays, and they certainly would not have approved of his last proposal. Until they had made up their minds about a possible marriage between their ward and Pieter—and at this point it was still unclear whether they even approved of the courtship—it was important for them to counsel Sophia to remain aloof. The more intimate her relations with Pieter and his family became, and the more the outside world noticed their connection, the more difficult it would be for Sophia to break off the relationship without losing face. Quite apart from the scandal that might arise, it was not unusual in the eighteenth century to instigate legal proceedings when promises of marriage were broken, and love letters and eye-witness accounts were often used in evidence.¹⁹⁶

Although a contemporary lawyer was perhaps exaggerating when he declared that objects exchanged between courting couples were potentially incriminating, 'even if they were only Deventer cakes', gifts could also be seen as pledges in a relationship.¹⁹⁷ Pieter's request in one of his letters to Sophia—that if she were to come to Dordrecht, she should wear her cloak from Cleves, 'because I like to see you in that dear garment, and if you wear your watch on a chain, you will do honour, and give great pleasure, to the one who gave it to you'¹⁹⁸—was therefore not devoid of tactical considerations. Such thoughts certainly motivated Pieter's request to Sophia to give each other as much proof as possible of their love and determination to marry: 'Thus we support and at the same time strengthen one another against everything that might beset us.'¹⁹⁹

If Pieter had been a baker, it is quite possible that he would have offered Sophia cakes as tokens of his affection, for his presents were mostly his own stock-in-trade: books and lottery tickets. He once gave Sophia 'a slender volume that has just rolled off our presses',²⁰⁰ a pocket almanac he had compiled and bound himself,²⁰¹ and a ten-volume devotional work which he described as 'the honour and truth of God and Holy Scripture defended

¹⁹⁵ 5 February 1771.

¹⁹⁶ *Haks, Huwelijk en gezin in Holland*, 123. See also M. Prak, *Gezeten Burgers. De elite in een Hollandse stad, Leiden 1700-1780* (Amsterdam/Dieren 1985) 153.

¹⁹⁷ *Haks, Huwelijk en gezin in Holland*, 123; Prak, *Gezeten burgers*, 159.

¹⁹⁸ 14 December 1770.

¹⁹⁹ 24 February 1771.

²⁰⁰ September 1770 (the letter does not have a more precise date).

²⁰¹ 6 December 1770.

against all enemies by Professor Lilienthal (of which only six copies have been printed).²⁰² This last present seems to have been mainly symbolic: because Sophia was bound to marry him in the foreseeable future, Pieter thought it more practical to spare all the trouble of sending the heavy tomes back and forth. Instead, he decided 'to keep them here, though I have set them aside especially for you: if you meanwhile choose one or two volumes to read—I hope to hear which ones from you personally—I shall send them to you'. Pieter's present of one-quarter of a lottery ticket, divided into a part for himself and a part for Sophia, was presented more elegantly:

You venture to share your lot with me. I sensed this recently, my dear –from now on we truly share each other's lot. Pure love and unfeigned loyalty will surely carve this upon both our hearts. Behold one-quarter of a lottery ticket ... which I first kept only for myself. I'm sending it to you, my darling. I hope it will win a good prize and am certain that you will share it with me. This, then, is the first enterprise we have undertaken together!²⁰³

In the following months there are repeated references to the results of various lottery draws which unfortunately did not win the jackpot. Pieter, however, remained optimistic to the end. 'Our number was not drawn in the fifth class, now only the sixth or first class remains, so we'll either draw nothing or win a prize in these, and I'm hoping for the latter because my Sophia is so lucky and is also taking part.'²⁰⁴ Sophia showed her true nature yet again when she tried to dampen Pieter's enthusiasm: 'Usually one wins nothing.'²⁰⁵ Indeed, they did not win the draw in either class, but because Sophia, together with her sister and brother-in-law, had bought other lottery tickets from Abraham (including a winning one), this allowed Pieter to assuage their loss by announcing it together with some good news, and he also took this opportunity to give Sophia a brief introduction to economics:

I hereby have the pleasure of informing you that today the number you received from my father won the sum of 250 guilders; our other number, which I sent to you, came up with nothing, but your prize now makes up for all the losses, for this is now pure profit.²⁰⁶

²⁰² 27 March 1771: ('de Eer en Waerheid van God en Goddelyker Schriften tegen alle vyanden door den Hoogleeraer Lilienthal vededigd'). Curiously, eight years later this work appears to have become less rare. In Pieter's 1778 catalogue of antiquarian books, the work is listed with the comment that twelve copies of the book were printed.

²⁰³ 30 November 1770.

²⁰⁴ 2 February 1771.

²⁰⁵ 4 February 1771.

²⁰⁶ 6 April 1771.

The couple proved susceptible to other games of chance as well. One bet Sophia lost to Pieter had to be paid for with considerable domestic diligence. She had promised to make an item of clothing for Pieter if she lost the bet, and he triumphantly reminded her of this. 'I count myself a lucky man, for I shall have a handsome suit made by my virtuous Sophia—oh how splendid that will be, how well you will choose, and make me something good, something nice. I long to see the fabric, and wish I could wear it already. Dearest Sophia, shall I send you my measurements?'²⁰⁷ The object of their wager—Uncle van Oven—would have thought twice about writing if he had known that his letter would prompt the production of yet more proof of his niece's involvement with Pieter. Or perhaps not. Sophia had expected the letter to contain a pronouncement concerning Pieter's suitability as a husband, but she was disappointed. Pieter claimed to have 'read immediately the letters from Uncle van Oven, and you see, he orders us to be patient for an indefinite period, just as I told you. I've kept the letters here with me, in order to save the cost of postage, but you must believe me without seeing them, and if you come here, I shall show you the letters.'²⁰⁸

After Pieter's stay in Cleves, Uncle van Oven became much less popular, as emerges from various passages in Pieter's letters. It was this guardian in particular who was blamed for the postponement of a decision and the increasingly tense atmosphere. Uncle van Oven's repeated requests that Sophia join him in Cleves were interpreted by Pieter as part of a cunning plot to take her away from him. Pieter tried to convince Sophia that her guardian was not acting in her best interests but to further his own plans. 'It is Uncle's own interests that prompt his actions and I clearly see that in order to achieve his ends he invites you to stay with him in Cleves. That way he could keep our relationship in check (to the displeasure of us both) and, however irresponsibly, possibly contrive to frustrate our best intentions, as well as sacrificing you, my darling, to ...'²⁰⁹ This attitude is very different from the one Pieter displayed in his first letter to Sophia, in which he solemnly declared to act in his own interests, but at the same time to serve hers:

I beseech you, please think of me as one who, while seeking his own welfare and happiness by winning you, is also motivated, on the other hand, by

²⁰⁷ 25 January 1771.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ 28 December 1770.

well-meaning and pure thoughts, so that, once we are joined at the altar in pure love and faithfulness, my chief joy will be the promotion of your and my happiness and welfare by seeking to increase yours.²¹⁰

In the end it was not Uncle van Oven in distant Cleves—he was politely thanked for his invitations, which were refused on the grounds that the ‘winter season’ made the journey impossible²¹¹—but Pieter who began to make headway with Sophia. The couple’s greater intimacy is apparent from the growing numbers of inside jokes in their letters and their increasingly informal style of writing.

Cupid’s Post Office: Writing Style

It seems that this was mostly Sophia’s doing. During one of their first meetings after they had begun to correspond, she apparently suggested that they dispense with ceremony and gallantries and adopt a more spontaneous style of writing. Perhaps she got this idea from Jacobus de Jongh’s *Postcomptoir van Cupido en Mercurius* (Cupid and Mercury’s Post Office),²¹² a pastiche of the popular handbooks used to compose love letters,²¹³ in which she discovered some suspicious similarities between Pieter’s case history and the complaints with which a number of the despairing suitors in that book are cursed. The admirer of Miss ***, for instance, says: ‘Since laying eyes on you I cannot eat or sleep, and perceive the most indescribable turmoil in the state of my health.’²¹⁴ And the lover of Calista needs only ‘a tertian fever to make his misery complete.’²¹⁵ Unlike one young lady in the handbook who responds to her lover’s continual complaints ‘about his lingering condition’ by sending him ‘such drivel as your heart is,’²¹⁶ Sophia embarked on a correspondence with her admirer on the condition that they keep to a straightforward style of writing. It took Pieter some time to get used to these new rules, however:

²¹⁰ 2 September 1770.

²¹¹ GAD, BFA, inv. 10.

²¹² J. de Jongh Jun., *Post-comptoir van Cupido en Mercurius* (4th edition; Amsterdam 1766). Pieter had this book in his shop, as appears from his antiquarian catalogue of 1779. See also Chapter Two.

²¹³ See W. van den Berg, ‘Briefreflectie in briefinstructie’, *Documentatieblad van de werkgroep 18e eeuw* (1978) no. 38, 1–22.

²¹⁴ De Jongh, *Post-comptoir*, 45.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

Thus I made a discovery, thanks to your good intentions, and I can only praise you and express my gratitude, and yet I am no longer obliged to do this, since you, my dearest friend, having relieved me of this duty, saying that no more formalities and compliments should pass between us. May pure love be the only force that moves and guides us! ... You already know my sensitive heart, so I shall cease to sketch it for you.²¹⁷

Sophia, in turn, also received instructions in letter-writing from her beloved, who told her not to let herself be held back by false modesty, as if her prose style were inferior to his, nor by the idea that she has nothing important to say: 'Because this would embarrass me, and because you would judge me rash; if I were to test all my letters against the touchstone of good judgement, I should find many defects in them.'²¹⁸ Even so, a month and several letters later, Sophia was still not entirely convinced: 'I believe that if my letters were to be tested against the touchstone of *your* good judgement, none of them would be allowed to exist.'²¹⁹ As was the case with her earlier request for more spontaneity in their correspondence, Sophia's professed contempt for her own—and admiration of Pieter's—style of writing was not completely unequivocal:

I ought not to bother you with correcting my letters, so please be patient with their many shortcomings. I wish I had some of your talent for writing a good letter. However, I have always imagined that if one has the honour of writing to a good friend, one should be allowed to concentrate on the contents of the letter—that, at least, is what I usually do.²²⁰

In Sophia's view, the words were less important than the message. Interestingly, she was most inclined to express her admiration of Pieter's facile pen whenever she had run out of news and wanted to round off her letter: 'I wish I had your wealth of words and topics, for then I could fill whole sheets with writing.'²²¹ But she could also put it more succinctly: 'Otherwise I must draw to a close, for my pen lacks the facility of yours.'²²²

Diversions on the Ice at Dordrecht

Even without a facile pen, Sophia was certainly able to provoke her beloved. This was the case, for instance, when Pieter deployed his rhetorical talents

²¹⁷ 8 November 1770.

²¹⁸ 8 November 1770.

²¹⁹ 11 December 1770.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ 6 April 1771.

²²² 3 January 1771.

to fit into a single paragraph a description of Dordrecht's appeal as his bride's future home and a profession of his devotion to her. The result was such an enthusiastic description of Dordrecht's wintry diversions that his solemn promise to forgo them unless his beloved was at his side sounds rather unconvincing:

Hearing so many tinkling bells and seeing so many young people speed across the smooth snow in sleighs drawn by swift four-footed animals, how sorry I am that I am not by your side, my darling, or you by mine. We should join the crowd and take part in the winter entertainments. ... This evening my sister and some of her friends are getting together, and they have decided to go on a sleigh-ride. This is how the young folk here amuse themselves, with music and song, until late at night. I've been invited to join the party, but I don't want to go, I'd be a poor companion. Only with my dear SOPHIA can I find happiness and only with her can I be companionable.

Such declarations were music to Sophia's ears, but her reaction was cool: 'According to your letter, the young people know how to amuse themselves this winter season in Dordrecht. I am certain that your sister had a most entertaining evening, and I do not doubt that you were one of the party.'²²³ When Pieter pleaded the pressure of work as an excuse for not joining her in Rotterdam to enjoy its winter diversions, Sophia suspected that 'the entertainment here does not bring you much pleasure'. So as not to take up too much of his time, she decided to keep her letter short: 'After all, you do not want to receive too many letters from me, so I wish to spare you and not demand too much of your time, occupied as you are in the manifold tasks that will keep you at home.' Pieter's answer came by return post: 'I kept my word, about which I wrote to you in my previous letter, as regards Friday evening. I happily watched my sister set off to join the party I leave it to you, my dear, to judge how much more pleasure Rotterdam holds for me, and you will suspect me no longer of either one thing or the other.'²²⁴ Whereupon he reminded Sophia that his work in the bookshop benefited not only his own interests but also their future: 'Here ice-skating and sleigh-riding are at present almost the only pastimes of young and old alike, but I stay in my bookshop and hope that I may soon receive heaven's blessing for my business, which must fill both our hearts with gratitude.' A number of his subsequent letters continue to stress the connection between his

²²³ 14 January 1771.

²²⁴ 15 January 1771.

efforts and her future.²²⁵ Moreover, the closing paragraph of Pieter's letter, in which he gives a clever twist to Sophia's suggestion that she not send him any more long letters so as not to distract him from his work, reveals that these two were well matched:

Just one more word, my darling: don't let my work prevent you from writing to me—the more you write to me, the less I need to search elsewhere for subject matter when replying to you ... the more detailed your correspondence, the more time and effort it will save me. Now I beg you, my most precious, let me receive a letter from you not every three or four days, but every day there is a postal delivery, so that my work load will be that much lighter.²²⁶

It is not only between the lines that Sophia's increasing emotional involvement becomes obvious. At the end of January 1771 she began—as Pieter had done months earlier—to declare her love in writing. At first she was cautious, claiming to be 'happy' to be in his thoughts, even in her absence: 'It is a sign of constancy, and mine will never falter either.'²²⁷ By the end of February, when an accord between her brother and Abraham Blussé about the pre-nuptial agreement seemed to be in sight, she risked more poetic outpourings: 'You are not out of my thoughts for half an hour; you constantly shimmer before my eyes like a pleasant ray of sunshine.' Two weeks later, when the marriage negotiations had come to an impasse, she did not back down. On the contrary, she now declared that without Pieter she had 'no pleasure or contentment, for you have captured my heart completely through your good qualities, of which you daily tell me'. Only the words 'and I hope never to bestow it on another' hint at the slightest reservation.

Buying the Trousseau

In the meantime preparations were being made for the young couple's future household. In long and jovial letters to each other, the main topics are domestic questions, such as whether or not to buy things at house sales, and whether to buy a smaller (and less expensive) carpet or a larger (and more expensive) one. In a letter dated 7 March (1771), for example, Pieter

²²⁵ 25 January 1771. The connection between these two interests is most clearly expressed in Pieter's letter of 6 April 1771, in which he reconciles himself to his stressful—and in this period even nocturnal—work in the bookshop by telling himself (and Sophia) that he must do it 'willingly and cheerfully, for the furthering of my and your good fortune depends on it, and in this way I do not neglect heaven's blessings'.

²²⁶ 15 March 1771.

²²⁷ 25 January 1771.

recounts his experience at a house whose contents were being auctioned off. He had bid on a dinner service that Sophia liked, but pulled out when the bidding went too high. Even when the service was subsequently offered to him at a lower price, he declined to buy it after hearing from others present that a similar service ‘could be bought more cheaply in the shops’. Sophia agreed completely: ‘The old people no doubt understood that it was also to be had for that price in the shops.’²²⁸ Even so, several days later Pieter again went bargain-hunting, and attended another auction, where—he was forced to admit to Sophia—he paid too much for household linen, brass candlesticks and some crockery. After giving Sophia a detailed description of the items bought and the prices paid, he asked her permission not to attend an auction in The Hague, which ‘might prove disappointing’. In the end it was ‘least expensive to buy new things, and the best’. Coming from an auctioneer of second-hand books, this was a remarkable statement. He seems to have acted immediately upon this conviction, for he describes with great enthusiasm ‘an extremely beautiful and newly made walnut writing desk’, which he had seen at a cabinetmaker’s for 70 guilders.²²⁹ He left it up to Sophia, however, to decide whether to purchase this desk or a less expensive one, saying: ‘I am happy to bow to your good judgement where household matters are concerned.’ She did not need to be told this twice. Having delicately impressed upon Pieter how much money he had thrown away at the house sale—‘It is just as well you didn’t buy the other things, for they would have cost a pretty penny, as you saw afterwards’—she suggests that they forget about the walnut desk and look out for a less expensive one.

The desk must be exceptionally beautiful, in view of its high price; we could make do with a somewhat less expensive one, though of course it should meet the same requirements. The best is always the cheapest: ordinarily one can buy a good desk for around 50 guilders, and even if it costs 60, one can’t be so strict in such matters. I should just buy a new one and ignore the old things at house sales.²³⁰

This put an end to Pieter’s auction escapades in an effort to complete his bride’s trousseau. On only one other occasion did he try—not without embarrassment—to acquire some items inexpensively, this time from the previous owner of his parents’ future house: ‘Perhaps the lady is willing to

²²⁸ 11 March 1771.

²²⁹ 15 March 1771.

²³⁰ Ibid.

sell some porcelain, pewter, etc. ... ; if this be the case, I shall see what we are in need of—provided it is in good condition and not too expensive—and let you know about it, if you promise not to call me a “Kitchen Claws”.²³¹

The other deliberations between Pieter and Sophia concerned the purchase of new things only, which were also examined carefully to make sure they were good value for money. A mirror that Sophia wanted apparently did not meet their standards, for Pieter informed her that ‘the larger mirror ... on further consideration, has remained in the shop’.²³² They also decided to buy a drawing-room carpet that was smaller than originally intended, both because the shopkeeper assured them that it would stretch out in time, and because it was a good deal less expensive.²³³ As it turned out, they got what they paid for: when the carpet was delivered, it proved to be so small that not only the desk but also several chairs were needed to disguise the fact. We see the same frugal pragmatism in their choice of wedding clothes. Pieter’s Aunt Noot advised him not to acquire too large a wedding wardrobe: ‘I advise you not to have more clothes made, because they won’t be of use to you, especially if you are shortly made a deacon, in which case you will have to wear black.’²³⁴ But she did encourage him to buy a number of pleated collars (‘stitched ruffs’), for these could also be worn after the wedding.

These deliberations gave Sophia some idea of how much spending money she would have once she became Pieter Blussé’s wife. As Pieter later admitted in his autobiographical notes, her budget was considerably smaller than what she had been used to, but she appeared not to shrink from a future in which her head would be filled with ‘hard-working diligence and frugal thoughts’.²³⁵ Her letters contain either approval of Pieter’s proposed economies or no comment. For instance, when he told her about the skimpy carpet and suggested that, instead of exchanging it, they buy a few more pieces of furniture, she agreed wholeheartedly: ‘If it is a fine carpet I should advise keeping it and do what you suggest in your letter to me, for it will certainly reach to the chairs.’²³⁶

During these domestic deliberations, which were punctuated with expressions of rapture about their future of wedded bliss,²³⁷ when they would

²³¹ 20 March 1771.

²³² 20 June 1771.

²³³ 9 June 1771.

²³⁴ 2 July 1771.

²³⁵ GAD, BFA, inv. 10.

²³⁶ 16 June 1771.

²³⁷ 28 December 1770.

‘melt together in the glow and manifestation of purest love’²³⁸—while behind the scenes, monograms were embroidered on their linen, household necessities such as furniture and crockery were purchased, and a servant was ‘reserved’²³⁹—Sophia’s guardians appear to have disappeared from the scene completely. But in fact they were still a force to be reckoned with.

Pre-nuptial Agreement

After a long silence, interrupted only by letters from the guardians, telling them to be patient, Sophia’s brother Johann Jacob Vermeer unexpectedly appeared in Dordrecht on 15 February 1771, to discuss matters with his sister’s intended husband.²⁴⁰ Although Pieter had congratulated himself beforehand—even before the brother’s arrival in Dordrecht—on the ‘swift and welcome outcome’ of the talks,²⁴¹ Johann Jacob’s verdict was not altogether favourable. This emerges from a letter written by Uncle van Oven—at a much later stage in the negotiations—which refers to this meeting with the remark that there was some discrepancy between the picture of matters Pieter formed during his visit to Cleves and the situation that Vermeer encountered. This was likewise apparent from the ‘severe’ pre-nuptial agreement: its exact contents remain unclear, but it aroused great indignation in both Pieter and Abraham Blussé. When Pieter informed his father of Johann Jacob’s proposal, Abraham ‘declared that he had never heard of or expected such a thing, and that as my father he would never accept such disadvantageous conditions, prejudicial to the fame and fortune of us both, but would oppose them with all fairness and modesty’.²⁴² Whereupon Abraham immediately set off for Rotterdam to have another talk with Sophia’s brother, in which he hoped ‘to win him over if possible to our reasonable and honest intentions’. At this point Pieter also called upon Sophia, who was urgently requested to support Abraham’s impassioned argument:

Be strong in speaking out for both me and you, and thus win honour and praise from all noble souls, and more especially, you will in this way bear

²³⁸ 30 April 1771.

²³⁹ In his letter of 24 February 1771, Pieter asked Sophia to consider hiring a maid. On 15 March 1771 he told her that his mother had hired a maidservant for them who had agreed to an annual wage of 46 guilders: ‘I hope she will serve us well and faithfully and that I shall not have to pay too much for her board and lodging: this has been fixed at 2 guilders and 10 stivers a week for as long as we do not require her services.’

²⁴⁰ 15 February 1771.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² 24 February 1771.

lively and resolute witness to your affection for me, which will give you the sweet pleasure of increasing my obligation, love and zealous ardour for you.

He also urged her 'not to conceal the feelings' she had for him in her letters to her guardians, so that they could make a strong stand against them. Pieter considered the proposal put forward by Sophia's brother to be nothing less than a declaration of war, as is evident from his request that Sophia seize the opportunity and travel back to Dordrecht with Abraham: 'Later on you may wish to do this, dear Sophia, and be prevented from doing so by members of your family.'

On this occasion, too, Sophia made no mention of Pieter's invitation in her reply. There seemed to be no reason for such precipitous action, since she could report with satisfaction that Abraham Blussé and her brother Johann Jacob had agreed on a compromise.²⁴³ Sophia's dowry would include a sum of money equal to that which Pieter brought to the marriage, and the rest of her capital would be put at her disposal when she turned twenty-five: 'Thus we shall be able to continue our business within seven years, as we hoped.' Evidently she assumed that Pieter would be as pleased as she was with this arrangement. Sophia's only concern was the approval of the other two guardians: 'I hope that their thoughts on the subject will concur completely with my brother's.' But Pieter was not at all happy with this new proposal, particularly the stipulation that prevented them from using Sophia's capital for the first seven years of their marriage. He wrote to say that, with respect to the compromise they had reached, he 'rejoiced from the bottom of his heart', even though it took less account of his interests than hers, and he went on to offer some critical comments.²⁴⁴ Only out of love for Sophia would he agree 'to everything that was reasonable, even though it may prove disadvantageous to us both, as I have already pointed out to you, dearest Sophia', adding that he trusted they would honour 'their blessed agreements'. Given their resolution to draw up, immediately after the marriage was solemnised, a will in which each named the other as sole heir, it was important that the pre-nuptial agreement did not prohibit this. Pieter was trying to minimise the risk that Sophia's property would revert to her family—rather than become his—if she were to die before the age of twenty-five. At this time, after all, he still had little capital, owning only a bookshop and its stock, and for most of that he was actually in debt to his father. Sophia's fortune, on the other hand, amounted to

²⁴³ 25 February 1771.

²⁴⁴ 26 February 1771.

at least 12,000 guilders. Moreover, the chance that Sophia would not live to be twenty-five was far greater than the chance of Pieter's premature death, if only because it would be a full seven years before she came of age, whereas Pieter, at twenty-three, had only two years to go. Furthermore, women were twice as likely as men to die within the first ten years of marriage, largely owing to complications during childbirth.²⁴⁵ In a letter to Sophia, Pieter also suggested they might be crossed by a ruling that prevented minors from making a will. To be sure, his family would also have the right to claim Pieter's property after his death: 'This would only be to your disadvantage, because my family would be able to demand money from you.' The real cause of his concern emerges from the second half of his argument: 'and on the other hand, it comes down to the self-interest or advantage of your heirs, completely to the detriment of your husband'. For this reason, Pieter argued, such a restriction would be completely unacceptable.

Pieter had a long time to fret and fume about this eventuality, for it was seven weeks before they heard anything from the guardians. Finally, in mid-April, they put forward a proposal that forbade the spouses to draw up a joint will.²⁴⁶ Moreover, a larger amount of Sophia's money than previously stated would be kept out of the marriage: now it was to be 12,000 guilders, instead of the original 10,000, which Sophia's brother would administer until her twenty-fifth birthday.

Pieter and his father were outraged. 'You can imagine, my dear, how much this casts me down, and how the fatherly, benevolent and disinterested designs of my father are so ungratefully wronged by it. His Honour is, with good reason, irate about it and would, if he were of an equally unnatural or cruel disposition, rightly refuse to have anything more to do with the matter.' Out of love for his son and Sophia, however, whom he did not want to 'plunge into distress', he had decided to proceed with caution. He hired a lawyer, one Mr de Witt, who, having declared the situation 'scandalous and unbearable', drew up a new pre-nuptial agreement and promised to expose the unreasonable and unlawful nature of the previous conditions.

²⁴⁵ This emerges from demographic information on regents' families in the eighteenth century. From the available figures it is apparent that between 1750 and 1774, 26.1% of marriages ended within ten years, owing to the death of one of the spouses. Of these spouses who died within ten years of marrying, 32% were men and 68% were women. The first childbirth was the most dangerous. On this subject, see Prak, *Gezeten burgers*, 189, 288 (Appendix 10, Table 3).

²⁴⁶ This is apparent from Pieter's letter of 14 April 1771.

Calling in Reinforcements

This lawyer, probably Herman Cornelis de Witt,²⁴⁷ was the first in a series of more or less powerful people whom Pieter and his father called upon to give them advice and mollify the guardians. Through De Witt's intercession, a Rotterdam lawyer, one Mr Vatebender,²⁴⁸ was approached, but when he too failed to get results, they appealed to Jacob van der Heim, a magistrate from the Rotterdam town council.²⁴⁹ It is clear from Pieter's summary of De Witt's plea to be put in touch with Van der Heim that the Blussés were preparing to bring legal action in Rotterdam against the guardians: 'His Honour is mortified by the negotiations and sees no other course of action than to appeal to the Rotterdam magistracy.'²⁵⁰ In this same period, De Witt proposed a far more powerful protectress, none other than Wilhelmina of Prussia, wife of Prince William V. De Witt suggested that Pieter could win the princess's favour by dedicating to her one of his recent publications, the *Beschrijving van Berlin en Potsdam* (A description of Berlin and Potsdam), which had been translated from the German. In a letter to his beloved, Pieter tried to give this proposal a romantic touch by emphasising that this princess, Frederika Sophia Wilhelmina, was both Sophia's fellow countrywoman and her namesake, by which he seemed to be suggesting that the book would, by extension, be dedicated to her as well. His chief motivation, however, was the possibility that this action would eventually

²⁴⁷ One year later Abraham was to write a eulogy to this gentleman to mark his appointment as chief sheriff of Dordrecht. See A. Blussé, *By de aanvaarding van het hooftschoutsampst der stad Dordrecht* (Dordrecht 1772) preserved in GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 7. J. de Witt, lord of Jaarsveld, held the offices of *Veertig* (a member of the Council of Forty), director of the Levant trade, school supervisor, commissioner of the municipal pawn bank (1775-83) and supervisor of the civic orphanage (1776-77). See T.J. de Bruin, *Dordrecht in de patriottentijd. De ambtsverdeling en politieke ontwikkelingen in een stad in de jaren 1780-1788* (unpublished master's thesis, University of Leiden 1984) 21.

²⁴⁸ This was probably a strategic move rather than a coincidence. The lawyer was most likely a member of the prominent Vatebender family from a district in Zutphen that maintained ties to the Vermeers. The person in question was possibly J.C. Vatebender, father of the famous G.C.C. Vatebender (rector in Gouda and author of the revolutionary educational plans devised in the Batavian era) or his brother, A.O.F. Bomble Vatebender (who in 1781 became a justice at the Court in Gelre and later secretary of the National Syndicate). I thank Willem Frijhoff for these suggestions.

²⁴⁹ From 1758 Jacob van der Heim (1727-1799) was member of the Rotterdam town council and commissioner of the Exchange Bank. He served as burgomaster in 1766 and 1767. His wife, Maria Arnouldina Gevaerts, was originally from Dordrecht. She was a daughter of the Dordrecht regent Paulus Gevaerts and Margaretha Alida Stoop (J.H.W. Unger (ed.), *De regeering van Rotterdam 1328-1892* (Rotterdam 1892) [= *Bronnen voor de geschiedenis van Rotterdam* 1] 348).

²⁵⁰ 11 May 1771.

benefit the two of them: if, in time, they were favoured or supported by the royal house, their case would triumph.

At the same time Pieter sought contact with lesser gods such as the Reverend Ritter—a Lutheran minister from Dordrecht who was Uncle van Oven's cousin—who promised to use 'his good offices out of love towards us and because we deserve his compassion'.²⁵¹ Pieter also managed to involve another cousin of Uncle van Oven, Mr Florens van Oven van Wesel, also living in Cleves, who happened to be staying with Reverend Ritter. Pieter quickly won the sympathy of this gentleman, whose wife, Lady van Strunken, had reportedly been 'very difficult to woo'. As Pieter recounted, 'I put my complaints to His Honour, and he was astonished to learn that the guardians had introduced such conditions, even though they could not have the slightest objection to any of us. Within a week he will return to Cleves and put in a good word for us.'²⁵² Mr van Oven van Wesel also advised Pieter to write a letter to Aunt van Oven, to persuade her to plead their cause, and even offered to deliver the letter in person. Apart from these outsiders, the Blussés also had a bridgehead in the circle of Sophia's next of kin, namely her brother-in-law Arnoldus van Sprang, a Rotterdam wine merchant and literary friend of Abraham Blussé. After all, Sophia lived in their home, and from the very beginning he and his wife, Sophia's sister Christina, had encouraged the relationship between Pieter and Sophia. Van Sprang, too, did what he could to mediate and report by letter from 'the front'.

A fierce attack was now launched against Uncle van Oven. It is hardly surprising that this guardian was Pieter's main target, since he had made a bad impression on Pieter during his visit to Cleves, and Sophia's brother had confirmed that it was Uncle van Oven who had voiced the greatest objections to the marriage. This is reflected in Pieter's letters to Sophia, in which Uncle van Oven is increasingly mocked and vilified. Pieter feared that this uncle would summon Sophia to Cleves with a view to locking her up—Bluebeard-style—and forbidding all further contact with him. Moreover, Pieter instantly blamed Van Oven for the guardians' collective proposal regarding the pre-nuptial agreement: 'Uncle van Oven drew it up, thereby showing that he wants to make things unacceptably difficult for us.'²⁵³ In a conversation Pieter had with one of the two Van Oven cousins—

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² 13 May 1771.

²⁵³ 14 April 1771.

the Lutheran minister—the subject of Uncle van Oven even prompted a discussion of the nature of the people living there: ‘He knows Uncle van Oven’s stubborn and rotten character as well as we do, and says that the family in Cleves are a greedy bunch and one should know that most of those people are blind to nature, religion and reason, and so he fears that the complaints of young lovers, the petitions of friends, and the intervention of strangers will have no effect.’²⁵⁴ This clergyman thus advised them not only to call upon mediators but also, as a precautionary measure, to inquire into the laws of Cleves.

Pieter had more weapons in his arsenal, however. Through Sophia he managed to lay hold of her father’s will, whereupon he showed it to the lawyers Vatebender and De Witt and they gave him the confirmation he had hoped for. In their opinion, Pieter and Sophia ‘now only have to negotiate with brother Vermeer’.²⁵⁵ The lawyers’ judgement was based on a clause in the will stating that the three guardians had been appointed for a limited time only, namely until his own son had come of age.²⁵⁶ In the previous month, on 9 April 1771, Johann Jacob Vermeer had celebrated his twenty-fifth birthday.²⁵⁷ Pieter’s relief at this seemingly fortunate turn of events now prompted him to reconsider his strategy: ‘We must also lay the case before Mr van der Heim and seek his advice. We can use both heavy and light artillery, but we must do our utmost to win.’²⁵⁸ In the end Pieter would have to rely on Uncle van Oven, and not his future brother-on-law, for the help he needed.

Even the light artillery angered Sophia’s brother, who, after claiming to have consulted the other guardians, wrote an angry letter to his sister, voicing his displeasure at the lawyers’ involvement, even before anyone had taken the trouble to inform him personally of their objections to the pre-nuptial agreement. Had they done so, ‘the matter might already have been settled’.²⁵⁹ Sophia was upset by his criticism and asked Pieter urgently to inform the guardians of their main objections to the proposal: ‘If you are inclined to do me a favour, ask the guardians to settle those points first.’ But these words only threw more oil on the fire.

²⁵⁴ 11 May 1771.

²⁵⁵ 13 May 1771.

²⁵⁶ GAD, BFA, inv. 9.

²⁵⁷ Ibid. This file also contains a genealogy.

²⁵⁸ 13 May 1771.

²⁵⁹ Quoted in Sophia’s letter of 26 May 1771.

So it goes: they wanted to treat us, blindfolded and utterly innocent, in such a way that we would accept all their proposals (completely against the law and contrary to our interests). The fact that we did not accept this in the very beginning immediately caused them to call us *disobedient* and *stubborn*, and because we negotiated with the help of others versed in law, though only in a friendly way, we have incurred their wrath, which anyone who considers their behaviour must surely condemn and which should bring shame upon their heads. If it were the guardians' warm and well-meaning intention to settle matters in the way fairest to us, then why (1) have the negotiations been so protracted? and (2) such bad conditions proposed that a loving father was forced to reject them (even though the young couple wanted to accept)? and (3) the letters accompanying those proposals so devoid of kindness and affection that the result was nothing but ill will?²⁶⁰

Pieter urged Sophia not to let her brother upset her: 'We have behaved only as is proper. The guardians tried to mistreat us, and the whole of the just world will defend our cause.' By appealing to the opinion of 'the just world' Pieter showed himself to be a child of his times. Also his following arguments, in which he defends enlightened self-interest as a motive for action, reveal that he was propelled by 'healthy' eighteenth-century middle-class morals: 'It is praiseworthy to be a good person in order to serve one's fellow human beings and be of use to them, but to act to one's own disadvantage is universally condemned, and a reasonable defence should have a place in a healthy mind.' To oblige Sophia, Pieter should have respectfully objected to the pre-nuptial agreement by return post, but he thought it wiser to wait for a letter from his Rotterdam lawyer: 'After all, we asked the advice of this good man, and perhaps he is the reason the guardians are already inclining towards an amicable settlement, so we shouldn't try to act again without him.'

In the meantime the other middlemen, too, were preparing for action: 'Meanwhile Reverend Ritter and Mr van Oven, who set out yesterday morning and arrived in Cleves yesterday evening, have undertaken to discuss with Mr van Oven, our guardian, a little plan I drew up, part of which you read about in the copy.'²⁶¹ With Sophia's permission, Pieter had written this proposal in both their names, which apparently caused the messengers to express their 'approval and admiration' of so much unanimity.

This delegation appears to have borne fruit. Within a fortnight Uncle van Oven had sent a new draft of the agreement, accompanied by a letter with his comments on Pieter's proposal and some revealing remarks about

²⁶⁰ 25 May 1771.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

the whole affair to date.²⁶² Thus it appears that on at least one occasion Sophia had allowed herself to be talked into staying in Dordrecht. Pieter told Sophia to counter her uncle's objections by pointing out that the visit had taken place with the knowledge of Sophia's brother-in-law and had served a useful purpose: she had made the journey to assist Pieter 'in buying what will be of use to both of us'. Van Oven's criticism of Pieter and his family was evidently no less harsh, for his remarks prompted Pieter to urge Sophia to attempt to dispel Van Oven's prejudices against 'our intentions, our actions and my family'. In Pieter's view, Van Oven's other objections were also based on misunderstandings, such as his assertion that Pieter had raised expectations during his visit to Cleves which later, during his talks with Vermeer, he was unable to fulfil. As Pieter said to Sophia, 'In fact your brother never breathed a word about this here; on the contrary, his seeming satisfaction makes me wonder whether his report is actually true.' The same thing supposedly applied to Van Oven's remark about their vacillation during the negotiations. This reproach was actually aimed at Sophia's brother, who had, after all, altered the first compromise without consulting anyone. The incorrect information on which Uncle van Oven had based his opinion made it clear to Pieter that 'the previous contract and dealings with your brother took place without your uncle's knowledge, and now His Honour is attempting (no doubt in order to spare your brother and uncle) to cover this up, but if it were not so, he would have lashed out at us some other way'. Pieter's altered insight into the role played by the various guardians and his new-found appreciation of Van Oven, who was 'frank and achieves more than the other two gentlemen put together', did not extend to Van Oven's proposal, which, as far as Pieter was concerned, was 'wholly inadequate'. The main obstacle, the stipulation that Sophia not be allowed to make a testamentary disposition of her fortune until the age of twenty-five, had not been removed.

Threats of Elopement

Pieter had reached the end of his tether, and perhaps he thought that he had meanwhile made sufficient preparations to win the lawsuit, if it should come to that. He told Sophia of his plan to have a notary draw up an alternative pre-nuptial agreement—after consulting both of them—and send it to the guardians with the message that 'these are our wishes, and if they

²⁶² Van Oven's letter is no longer extant, but his comments are reflected in Pieter's letter of 10 June 1771.

do not approve, then we shall simply marry under common law without a pre-nuptial agreement, and the guardians may then act as they see fit'. Pieter was playing for high stakes with this threat of elopement, no matter what the cost. Although Sophia did not live with her guardians and so did not have to run away in order to marry, this course of action nevertheless gave the guardians an opportunity to appeal to an edict issued by the States of Holland in 1751 against 'elopement', that is, marrying without the parents' consent. Elopement could result in serious financial sanctions, including the possibility of declaring such couples incompetent to administer their own property and excluding them from various inheritances.²⁶³ The Blus-sés were pinning their hopes on a loophole in the law, for the marriage law that had been in effect since 1580 required minors to obtain their parents' consent, but did not mention anything about guardians.²⁶⁴

If it were up to Pieter and his father (according to Pieter, Abraham was in complete agreement with his proposals), from this moment on the guardians could either 'like it or lump it'. Sophia saw the situation quite differently. She told Pieter coolly that she had understood from his letter that 'the pre-nuptial agreement was unsatisfactory', but that she personally did not find it unacceptable: 'We shouldn't expect the guardians to make all the concessions; we should also be prepared to relinquish something on our side, and if our chief interests are each other, we can deal with the matter so much better.'²⁶⁵ This may have been her way of suggesting subtly that Pieter's love for her should be greater than his longing for material possessions. She adamantly refused to help with his new plan to thwart the guardians. She was afraid that by marrying without their consent or even threatening to do so, they would antagonise the guardians even more—which might make them decide to deny her, until the age of twenty-five, not only the testamentary disposition but also the usufruct of her property. She thus wrote to Pieter: 'I shall never agree to your proposal. I don't want to cut myself off from all my property,²⁶⁶ which, until I am twenty-five, the guardians have the right to withhold from me.'

²⁶³ Prak, *Gezeten burgers*, 180–81.

²⁶⁴ This article of marriage law, which stemmed from the Politieke Ordonnantie (political ordinance), was still in force in 1771. There were local differences, however, with some regions granting more power to guardians (Haks, *Huwelijk en gezin in Holland*, 117). See also R.A. de Bree, 'Het verbroken engagement of Een blauwe maandag: Rhijnvis Feith en de liefde', *Overijsselse historische bijdragen* (1991), which provides a detailed discussion of the legal obscurities.

²⁶⁵ 11 June 1771.

²⁶⁶ Sophia's inheritance had been safeguarded in the will of her deceased father; she was to remain a ward only until she came of age. Thus the guardians could not disinherit

While Sophia was still trying to formulate her thoughts on the matter, Pieter wrote another letter telling her of his about-face.²⁶⁷ He had re-read Uncle van Oven's proposal 'and upon further consideration'—which presumably included consultation with his lawyers—he had 'discovered that we cannot and may not make any further changes' to the pre-nuptial agreement. To be sure, it barred her from administering her property until she came of age, but neither the pre-nuptial agreement nor Dutch law prevented her from bequeathing her estate to Pieter if she should die before the age of twenty-five. It is hardly surprisingly, then, that Pieter, having discovered this loophole in the agreement, would not rest until this version had become official. He immediately had a new copy made, which he enclosed in his letter to Sophia, kindly requesting her to send it at the first opportunity to Cleves and to inform her uncle that 'this is entirely in accordance with your and my wishes, and that his thoughts have now been followed literally and without any changes'. Pieter also asked Sophia to urge her uncle to wind up matters quickly and to request his permission for them to publish their marriage banns.

Pieter could now heave a sigh of relief, for contrary to all expectations, the joyful moment when they would be able to meet 'as beloved bride and groom' seemed to be fast approaching. He concluded contentedly that thanks to this amicable settlement, the 'hateful ruptures and protracted legal proceedings' he had reckoned on could now be prevented. Pieter's change of heart about Uncle van Oven—which had gone from utter antipathy to great sympathy—was now complete. He reminded Sophia to send word to this gentleman as soon as possible, and make it clear that 'unbeknownst to him', they had both 'been led up the garden path, and because we now raise no objections he will see that we had no devious intentions and in future he will be our good friend'. In Pieter's postscript at the end of this letter, Van Oven is completely exonerated by a statement made by Reverend Ritter, who confirms 'our idea that the previous negotiations took place without Uncle's knowledge, for that excellent gentleman had long since given your brother and Uncle Hecking (as your closest relatives) the freedom to settle your affairs as they see fit and even asked to be excused from the task, and so it was wrong to blame him. Farewell, darling

her if she should die intestate or leave her property as a family estate (*fidei-commis*). In the latter case the inheritance would devolve upon the grandchildren. See G. Coumans, 'Geld en geluk: de familie van der Muelen in gezinshistorisch perspectief 1600-1800', *Jaarboek Oud-Utrecht* 87 (1984) 99-120, esp. 111-13.

²⁶⁷ This letter, like Sophia's, dates from 11 June 1771.

Sophia. Time thus clarifies all things.' A few days later it appeared that Pieter now planned to dedicate his *Beschrijving van Berlin en Potsdam* (A description of Berlin and Potsdam) not to Wilhelmina of Prussia but to Uncle van Oven—if indeed this gentleman would appreciate such a gesture: 'If you think that dedicating the book to your uncle would be taken as flattery rather than a token of friendship, I shall abandon the idea completely, since my heart is altogether averse to such imputations.'²⁶⁸

Now that all obstacles to the marriage had been removed, the time had come to thank others who had become involved, such as Florens van Oven van Wesel, whose successful mediation was acknowledged in a letter of thanks. Another such letter was sent to Mr Vatebender, whose services were no longer needed. This lawyer had done his work well, for less than a month later—on 11 July 1771—the definitive pre-nuptial agreement was drawn up in Cleves and signed three days later.²⁶⁹ This agreement was the result of complicated legal wrangling, at the end of which both parties were convinced that they had got the better of the other. The stringent conditions governing Sophia's property, which Pieter and his father had opposed so much at first that they had called in legal reinforcements, were retained (in toned-down form) in this document. Until Sophia came of age, the young couple would have the usufruct of her estate, but not the right to administer it. Nor would they be able, before that time, to sell off any of her assets (meaning the entire 12,000 guilders, and not the 10,000 guilders previously agreed upon). If either Pieter or Sophia were to die before having any children, the surviving spouse would inherit all their joint property—meaning both their dowries and Pieter's book business with any newly acquired capital—with the exception of Sophia's 12,000 guilders. Sophia's fortune would revert to her own family if she died childless after the age of twenty-five and had left no other testamentary disposition. This implied, of course, that if Sophia died before the age of twenty-five, her fortune would automatically revert to her family, but her guardians apparently found it unnecessary to spell this out. If indeed there were children, they—and not the surviving spouse—would inherit the 'paternal or ma-

²⁶⁸ 14 June 1771.

²⁶⁹ The unsorted section of the Blussé family archive contains, in box 1, a letter of authorisation, signed by all three guardians on 11 July 1771, giving Cornelis Arnoldus van Sprang the right to represent them in concluding the pre-nuptial agreement, 'according to the project signed by both parties and known to Your Honour'. The pre-nuptial agreement refers to this letter (GAR, notary Justus van der Mey Jr, inv. 3044).

ternal estate'. And even if one or more of these children were to die, the estate would be inherited not by 'the surviving father or mother, but by a brother or sister'. So much for the brickwork bolstering the Vermeer's family property. One of the last paragraphs, however, contained a stipulation with the potential to throw a spanner in the works: 'Finally, the intended spouses expressly reserve the right to bequeath their worldly goods to each other.'

A Lovely Wedding After All

Having been carried away by Pieter's romantic rhetoric and exhausted by the time-consuming and long-winded discussions involving the pre-nuptial agreement, a sigh of relief would not have been inappropriate. The *moment suprême* was nearing, and preparations for the wedding could finally get underway. The invitations were printed, and lists of friends and relations were compiled, with the usual discussion about which friends should actually be invited. As always, Aunt Noot's advice was extremely welcome:

It would be proper for you to ask Cousin van Sprang, but if you do, you will be obliged to invite Aunt and Uncle Brasser as well, and if you invite them, you will also have to ask your Aunt and Uncle Brooshoofd and other friends too, otherwise you will inevitably exclude certain people, thereby causing bad blood. So it would be best to invent some excuse for not inviting Cousin van Sprang and Uncle Brasser, and afterwards make up for it by welcoming them warmly on some other occasion, which will make up for everything.²⁷⁰

Whether or not to send a bottle of hippocras (a traditional wedding wine) to various relations was also a point to consider. Fortunately, both Sophia and her sister found it unnecessary to follow this expensive custom, which was particularly popular among the upper classes.²⁷¹ The wedding clothes were made ready; Pieter and Sophia were to wear clothing of the same colour. The small but precious gift to be presented to the bride on the

²⁷⁰ These words of Aunt Noot's are quoted by Pieter in a letter dated 2 July 1771.

²⁷¹ Hippocras, made of wine flavoured with spices (such as cinnamon), was sent in bottles decorated with ribbons. For more about this custom, see S.I. von Wolzogen Kühn, *De Nederlandsche vrouw in de eerste helft der 18e eeuw* (Leiden 1914) 79 and Prak, *Gezeten burgers*, 157. Pieter also suggested to Sophia that they send confectionery, by which he was probably referring to the custom, common among the urban elite in the first half of the eighteenth century, of sending square wooden boxes adorned with green ribbons and filled with all kinds of sweets; according to Wolzogen Khür, however, this custom had fallen into disuse by the third quarter of the eighteenth century (Wolzogen Kühn, *De Nederlandsche vrouw*, 78-79).



6. C. Kuipers, Family Portrait of Pieter Blussé (at the age of 29), his wife, Sophia Arnolda Vermeer (24), and their children Hendrik (1) and Abraham (4), 1777. Private collection.

morning of the wedding also lay ready: a ring and a pair of earrings.²⁷² More jewellery could always be bought later on, or taken over from Aunt Noot: 'Both of you may later choose a ring or something else to have from me; you're welcome to it, and I shall keep to the value at which they were assessed.'²⁷³ The clergyman who was to conduct the wedding, Sophia's Cousin van Sprang from Maassluis, was notified of this. Moreover, the 'wedding boat',²⁷⁴ a beautiful sailing boat that would transport the party to Dordrecht after the ceremony, was fitted out and decorated. In Dordrecht the guests would be treated to a banquet served in Pieter's parental home,

²⁷² This present, given on the morning of the marriage, was usually paid for by the bride's family. For an overview of the usual wedding expenses, see Prak, *Gezeten burgers*, 159-65.

²⁷³ As quoted in Pieter's letter of 2 July 1771.

²⁷⁴ Described by Pieter in his preliminary autobiographical notes (GAD, BFA, inv. 10). The following quotations, unless otherwise stated, also come from this source.

but not before the bride's new parents-in-law had presented her with 'a precious Bible with a golden clasp'. Abraham's literary friends would, of course, put on a good show, having taken this opportunity to compose a number of verses in which the traditional themes continually crop up.²⁷⁵ Indeed, Pieter's profession of bookseller appears to have provided ample material for many a punning poem. Gerrit Beyer, Pieter's fellow book dealer from The Hague, wished Pieter 'A happy home of blessed inspiration, not oppressed by trial or tribulation.'²⁷⁶ Beyer's fellow townsman and bookseller Johan van Hoogstraten wrote a variation on this theme: 'May prosperity, not pressed down by stress, lead through printing to immense success.'²⁷⁷ And Pieter Leuter of Rotterdam, one of Blussé's regular translators, expressed this hope for the young couple's future: 'Health and riches, honour, happiness. / Rejoice, curb excess pressure through the press.'²⁷⁸ The wedding night and the conception of numerous offspring were, of course, inexhaustible sources of inspiration. The groom's father, for example, wished his son 'blessed coupling', which would ensure the continuation of his line.²⁷⁹ Abraham's friends happily went on in this vein, chanting in chorus 'Go, the bridal bed awaits',²⁸⁰ 'Lead her now to the nuptial bed',²⁸¹ and 'May we see from this young pair / Within a year a newborn heir!'²⁸² Pieter's patience was also made much of in these laudatory poems: 'Blussé, who with reason, faith and diligence / Has employed the finest weapons in his defence' in persuading the 'virginal bosom' to consent to marrying him.²⁸³ Now, however, it is high time for us to put things in perspective, particularly Pieter's supposed patience and perseverance.

In the early afternoon of 15 August 1771, when the bells of Rotterdam Cathedral were rung to mark the marriage of Pieter Blussé and Sophia Vermeer, the couple—who had known each other less than a year—had already exchanged eighty-seven letters.²⁸⁴ By eighteenth-century standards, their period of engagement was remarkably short. Most of their

²⁷⁵ *Trouw-zangen voor den heere Pieter Blussé en mejuffrouwe Sophia Arnolda Christina Vermeer* (Dordrecht 1771) (GAD, bib. 104.636 and GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 58). The quotations immediately following are taken from this collection.

²⁷⁶ *Trouwzangen*, C3r.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, C4r.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, E1v.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, A3r.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, in the poem by Cornelis Arnolus van Sprang, B1v.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, in the poem by Gerrit Beyer, C2v.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, E2v.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, in the poem by G.M.N., B3r.

²⁸⁴ Pieter wrote sixty of these, and Sophia twenty-seven.

contemporaries had to wait at least three years before exchanging written promises of marriage.²⁸⁵ Sophia's age—a mere eighteen—was also exceptionally young for a bride in those days.²⁸⁶ Uncle van Oven's concern that the couple had been carried away by the heat of the moment—as evidenced by such hasty and rash actions as Sophia's stay with Pieter's family in Dordrecht—was not ungrounded, for Pieter had moved things along very quickly indeed.

In his letters to Sophia, Pieter had ranted and raved about her guardians' unreasonable demands and their habit of withdrawing for lengthy periods of deliberation, but it was absolutely necessary for parents and guardians to proceed with caution when drawing up a pre-nuptial agreement. After all, once they were married, women were not in a position to act independently—they went from being wards of their parents or guardians to being wards of their husbands—so it was essential for the pre-nuptial agreement to contain guarantees that would safeguard their rights to the family fortune.²⁸⁷ This attitude is reflected in the pre-nuptial agreement to which Sophia's guardians finally gave their approval. If Sophia insisted, she could—when she attained her majority at the age of twenty-five—transfer her property into joint ownership with her husband, but this required a separate notarial act, and the document had to be signed by Sophia. The course of events suggests, however, that Sophia thought she could dispense with such guarantees. Five weeks after the wedding, when Pieter Blussé, Sophia Vermeer and Pieter's parents again appeared before a notary—this time in Dordrecht—to draw up their will, Sophia made good on her earlier promise to Pieter. In this will, which effectively revoked the terms of the pre-nuptial agreement, each spouse named the other as sole heir 'to all his or her estate with nothing and no exception'. For the sake of completeness, a clause was added, stating that this included the 12,000 guilders, which the pre-nuptial agreement had excluded from their joint property and which was to be administered by her brother until she came of age.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁵ Haks, *Huwelijk en gezin*, III, 136-37.

²⁸⁶ Prak, *Gezeten burgers*, 176; Haks, *Huwelijk en gezin in Holland*, 129.

²⁸⁷ Judith Hokke, "Mijn alderliefste Jantielief". *Vrouw en gezin in de Republiek: regentenvrouwen en hun relaties*, *Jaarboek voor vrouwengeschiedenis* 8 (Nijmegen 1987) 45-74, esp. 53-54.

²⁸⁸ If Sophia were to die childless before Pieter, her inheritance would revert to her family. Abraham Blussé and Pieter's mother, Cornelia Vallaré, renounced their legal share (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 51, notarial act, drawn up on 24 September 1771 by Anthonij Bax, in which reference is made to the pre-nuptial agreement, drawn up on 24 July 1771 by the Rotterdam notary Justus van der Meij Jr).

With one stroke of the pen, Sophia thus nullified the protective clause her guardians had insisted upon. Given the effort it had cost them to have this stipulation included, they must have been taken aback by Sophia's actions, if indeed they heard about them.

The guardians' reservations about their ward's marriage to Pieter were based on more than just material considerations. A married woman took on the social standing of her husband, and in Sophia's case that meant a station lower than her own. Pieter also admitted this, but only at the end of his life. Then, looking back upon his years of marriage, he observed that Sophia, 'although she had grown up in a somewhat more elevated station, had adapted herself completely to my more middle-class condition'.²⁸⁹ Peace did not always reign in their household, however. In the margin of Pieter's autobiography he jotted down some of Sophia's less admirable qualities: 'Endowed by the Wise Ordainer of Everything with a determined and passionate disposition rather than sound judgement, her emotions are easily roused and she is unexpectedly overcome by jealousy.' Here Pieter neglected to mention that were it not for Sophia's 'passionate disposition', they might never have married. After all, according to eighteenth-century marital ethics, marriage between people of unequal standing was overstepping the norm. Pieter ignored this problem in his letters to Sophia, but he was nonetheless aware of it, as emerges from his identification with the protagonist of a contemporary novel. On 6 April 1771, when the negotiations between his family and Sophia's had reached a deadlock, Pieter told Sophia that he was reading *De geschiedenis van Justus* (The story of Justus), about the courtship between a youth of lowly birth and an aristocratic young lady. He found it very moving:

Yesterday in the sloop I read, with considerable emotion, the story of Justus.²⁹⁰ It paints for us a splendid and edifying picture, in which virtue displays great splendour, and by delighting in Julianne I discovered the image of my Sophia, while I promised to follow in the footsteps of Justus (the sincere), so that you will think me like him.

But if we take a close look at the story of Justus, Pieter proves to be a poor reflection of the protagonist. It is not Julianne, as Pieter suggests in his letter to Sophia, but Justus who plays the part of hero. Although this young man is not inclined to contest his humble station in eighteenth-century society,

²⁸⁹ GAD, BFA, inv. 10.

²⁹⁰ This story is included in the anonymous collection of stories, published in Amsterdam in 1771, titled *Zedelyke uitspanningen bestaande in vier geschiedenissen*, 193-254.

his extraordinarily noble nature helps him to win the heart of the socially superior Juliane. This Dutch variation on Rousseau's novel *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse*,²⁹¹ which apparently defends marriage between social unequals, could have been used by Pieter to win Sophia over. One may well ask, however, if Pieter read the book attentively enough. On closer reading, the moral of this eighteenth-century soap is decidedly ambivalent, and because such ambivalence is typical of the eighteenth-century obstacles Pieter and Sophia had to overcome in order to marry, we must be forgiven for reading over Pieter's shoulder.²⁹²

Social Mobility without Repercussions: The Story of Justus

The main character in this story, first published in Dutch in the year of Pieter's engagement, is Justus—'the son of simple but very virtuous and loving country folk'—whose admirable character becomes evident at a very early age.²⁹³ While still a little boy, he catches a thief red-handed but agrees not to turn him in when the wretch promises to mend his ways. At the age of eight, Justus is taken in by a wealthy landowner, who asks him to be a companion to his young, sickly son. Justus accepts the position on the condition that he be allowed to wear his usual clothing, so as not to hurt his parents' feelings.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Justus emerges at the age of eighteen as a young man with 'great knowledge and understanding', who succeeds in charming 'everyone with whom he speaks, because of his sensible conversation, cheerfulness and diligence'.²⁹⁴ This admiration is shared by the country squire, who, upon the death of his son, adopts Justus and makes him his heir. When his stepfather dies, however, Justus renounces his inheritance in favour of the widow of his stepfather's brother, who has fallen out of favour. 'The recipients, upon hearing this unexpected speech, are extremely embarrassed and refuse with one voice to accept the estate.'²⁹⁵ Justus is implacable, however, and returns with his few possessions, 'which

²⁹¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (Paris 1758). For a detailed study of this work from the perspective of social mobility, see J.W. Oerlemans, *Rousseau en de privatisering van het bewustzijn. Carrièreisme en cultuur in de achttiende eeuw* (Groningen 1988) 113-19.

²⁹² The influence of literature on 'real life' is, of course, equally interesting from a literary-historical point of view.

²⁹³ *Zedelyke uitspanningen*, 193.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 203.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 215.

consist mainly of books and a few trifles', to his biological parents,²⁹⁶ although not before attempting, in vain, to say farewell to his great love, the unattainable Juliane. Completely unaware of his increasing fame in the city, where news of his renouncement of the inheritance spreads like wildfire, he tries, after returning home, to forget Juliane, but without much success. Gradually, however, his star begins to rise.²⁹⁷

One day Justus comes across a chest in his parents' home that contains some old papers. Wondering what they are, he turns to his father, who feels compelled to reveal the family secret. Justus learned that his grandmother Dorilla had been 'a beautiful and virtuous girl' of noble descent.²⁹⁸ Like Sophia, Dorilla had fallen in love at the age of seventeen with a twenty-year-old man of low birth and limited means. Her father objected, but she continued the relationship nevertheless. Owing to the evil influence of her brother—which Pieter would have seen as a reflection of his own problems with Sophia's brother—Dorilla's father disowned her when she married. The end of this *petite histoire* would have given Sophia little comfort. Dorilla was pregnant with Justus's father when her loving husband was slain on the battlefield. Not long after this, her father decided to reinstate his young, widowed daughter in his will, but died before he could act on this intention.

A year after learning about his noble lineage, Justus is in for another surprise. The town council appoints him to the office previously held by his deceased stepfather. Because he has the 'secret suspicion, to which he could give no name, that the discovery of his noble birth might prove useful', he takes the proof of his descent with him to town and goes to Juliane's house.²⁹⁹ Again, she appears to be in no condition to receive him. The girl's anxious parents tell Justus that since his departure she has grown 'extremely weak' and is 'wasting away' for no apparent reason.³⁰⁰ The reader now begins to suspect the cause of her malady, but the narrator is certain of it: 'The gentle Juliane was afflicted with unrequited love. ... She loved Justus but dared not tell him.'³⁰¹ Juliane decides she would 'rather die than dishonour her maidenhood by marrying a man who—despite his obvious merits and the fact that he holds numerous offices—has no right to force

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 216.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 221.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 232.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 233.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 234.

his way into the ranks of persons whose birth and riches raise them above the masses'.³⁰² After the inevitable complications, however, the narrator miraculously enables Juliane to combine her love of tradition with her love for Justus. Her family accidentally discovers that Justus is none other than the long-sought heir of Juliane's grandfather. Any possible incestuous complications are circumvented by ascertaining that Juliane and Justus have no ties of blood; they are merely related by marriage. Justus's great-uncle—his grandmother Dorilla's brother, who was partly responsible for her disinheritance—turns out to be the stepfather of Juliane's father. The latter had been forced to promise, at the deathbed of his repentant stepfather, to track down Dorilla's heirs and give them the largest part of the inheritance.

So all's well that ends well, especially when the resulting marriage is based on love between social equals. Through Justus's parents, who renounce their share of the inheritance, the narrator provides a final moral to the story. Justus's parents consider this inheritance 'a good which will be of use to Justus and Juliane', but to them it represents a danger than can only undermine their 'simple rustic happiness'. They are content with their life, and would not for a moment contemplate 'exchanging it for the shimmer of wealth and all its precarious privileges. For of what use are riches, which serve only to agitate our animal feelings and emotions, to swell our haughty hearts and teach us to despise our fellow men and neglect our duties?'³⁰³ In the eyes of Justus's parents, few people are incorruptible. Justus, who in his youth lived among different social classes without losing his virtuousness, is the exception.³⁰⁴

This novel confronts the reader with a confusing mixture of conflicting ideals, both old and new. The ideal, which gained ground in the eighteenth century, of romantic love as the basis of marriage and middle-class virtue—inner nobility is rated more highly than social class—clashes here with the natural hierarchy of society.³⁰⁵ It is only a happy combination of circumstances, by which Justus is elevated to the position of Juliane's social and economic equal, that can ease this tension. Juliane's French namesake,

³⁰² Ibid., 235.

³⁰³ Ibid., 245.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 247.

³⁰⁵ Cf. the satire *De Delftsche juffer of het listig levensgedrag van een bedaagde vryster* (The Hague 1758), in which the heroine—a seamstress—attempts to win a suitor from higher social circles by pretending to be a lady of high birth. She is unmasked, however, and ends up in prison. See P. Altena, 'Schandaal in Delft. List en leugen in de Delftsche Juffer (1758)', *Jaarboek Delftse Batavorum voor 1997* (1998) 59–71.



7. Illustration from a comedy by Gellert titled *Het lot in de lotery* (Amsterdam 1778), which deals with the subject of the impossibility of marriage between social unequals. The engraving is by Reinier Vinkeles. National Library, The Hague.

Julia, does not fare so well. Despite her love for the lower-born St Preux, she chooses to marry a man who is her social equal—preferring to jeopardise her own, rather than her parents', happiness—and her inability to combine these two loves leads to her ruin. By portraying the insoluble conflict between traditionalism and liberalism, Rousseau expresses the sense of unease—which grew stronger in the second half of the eighteenth century—that resulted from increased social mobility, which would ultimately destroy the reassuring safety net offered by traditional society, in which everyone, high and low, knew his place and derived a certain sense of security from that knowledge. After all, the possibility of quitting one's class, through good fortune or achievement, and climbing the social ladder implied the possibility—practically nonexistent before this time—of downward mobility.³⁰⁶ Such sentiments are also found in the story of Justus, when his parents explain why they have chosen to refuse their share of the inheritance. They value their rustic happiness too much to risk destroying it by the uncertainty and unease that a rise in social standing would cause. Only Justus—who, like Rousseau, has lived among all social orders without becoming corrupted—proves to be an exception to this rule.

It is therefore doubtful whether Sophia, having received this novel from Pieter, could read it without misgivings. Like its heroine, she could not expect any miracles. While Juliane's beloved changes from pauper to prince, Pieter, even after marrying Sophia, will remain a middle-class tradesman with great ambitions but limited means. The price of her passion was downward social mobility.³⁰⁷ One might say that, despite the sober tone of her letters, Sophia's decision to marry her sweetheart was much more romantic than the choice made by Juliane.

All things considered, there is little reason to doubt the sincerity of Sophia's love. Pieter, by contrast, falls somewhat short of his role model, the extremely modest and altruistic Justus. Pieter's behaviour during the negotiations of the pre-nuptial agreement testify to very different qualities: a calculating and businesslike approach, combined with dogged persever-

³⁰⁶ See Oerlemans, *Rousseau en de privatisering van het bewustzijn*. Cf. also A. Labrie, 'Briefcultus en sociale eenzaamheid in Duitsland rond 1800', *Theoretische geschiedenis* 17 (1990) 351-57. This study suggests a link between letter-writing in itself—the epistolary cult apparently recognisable among the German intelligentsia in the last decades of the eighteenth century—and the gradual disintegration of traditional class society.

³⁰⁷ In a discourse on marriage written in 1771, W. de Vos states that 'the man who marries a woman of lower rank elevates her, while he who marries a woman of higher rank degrades her' (Haks, *Huwelijk en gezin in Holland*, 132).

ance. Indeed, Pieter's passion for Sophia must be sought in the tone of his love letters.

Self-interest versus True Love

The intensity of Pieter's feelings cannot be inferred from the ornate phrases that pepper his letters—'This cannot continue, the feeling that you are constantly killing me'³⁰⁸ and 'I repeatedly search for colours like a blind man'³⁰⁹—which seem to have been inspired by the letter-writing manuals so fashionable in those days, as well as by the epistolary novels that were gaining in popularity during the last quarter of the century. Indeed, some of Pieter's more lyrical outpourings were taken directly from literature. In one of his earliest letters, for instance, Pieter describes his feelings by repeating the verses composed by another young man who trumpets his love of a lady named Christiane, after which he does not hesitate to quote six couplets from the same poem: 'Grant, O Lord, that I, too, may win that noble heart / And that a similar flame may singe her virtuous soul.' He concludes by asking Sophia to contemplate these words and consider her love for him.

It is the more spontaneous passages in Pieter's letters that afford glimpses of his love for Sophia: when, for instance, surrounded by his publications, he took advantage of a quiet moment during the day or when the shop was closed at night (by which time he was exhausted) to pour his heart out: 'Excuse my poor writing and worse style, my darling, but constant interruptions in the shop force me to keep this short.'³¹⁰ Or when he describes his embarrassment at receiving an unexpected letter from her in the presence of two friends who were visiting him: 'I felt the blood rush to my cheeks at the sight of your name. I did not doubt that I had seen it correctly, but lacked the confidence to read your letter in the presence of my friends.' Having excused himself, he withdrew to read the letter on his own.³¹¹

In the light of such passages the story of Pieter and Sophia could be considered an example of the romantic love said by some historians to be on the rise in the eighteenth century.³¹² This refers to the shift from a mar-

³⁰⁸ 13 October 1770.

³⁰⁹ 17 September 1770.

³¹⁰ 30 November 1770.

³¹¹ 25 September 1770.

³¹² See, for instance, E. Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (Glasgow 1975) 225. A. Macfarlane detects traces of this as early as the sixteenth century, while Hokke, on the basis of her research into the correspondence between several members of regents' families,

riage undertaken for practical reasons (and often with a partner approved, if not chosen, by one's parents) to a marriage based on love (with a partner of one's own choosing). In deciding to marry Pieter, Sophia defied her guardians, just as Pieter had previously dismissed his father's attempts at match-making. But given the problems created by their decision, it is clear that their freedom of choice was not so free after all. Passionate love was wonderful, but preferably between people of the same class. The novel Pieter read with such relish—the story of Justus, whose author went through all kinds of contortions to give the tale a socially acceptable ending—illustrates how narrow the margin of tolerance was in the eighteenth century as regards the freedom to choose one's spouse. Moreover, the romantic element was not the only ingredient of *The Story of Pieter and Sophia*. Considering Sophia's fortune and Pieter's frantic attempts to arrive at the best possible financial arrangement for himself, which entailed the risk that Sophia would give up the fight, it is clear that this marriage was not devoid of business interests. True love and cool calculation are not mutually exclusive, however. The two may even go hand in hand, as Ahasverus van den Berg pointed out at Pieter and Sophia's wedding:

Above all when a soul so pure,
As pure and sweet as she,
Adds to these virtues the allure
Of wealth and legacy.³¹³

The same combination of romantic love and prosaic business is discernible—if one is not blinded by the profusion of cupids and garlands—on the title page of the volume containing this nuptial poem. This engraving, which was probably taken from one of Blussé's publications, shows an amorous couple wandering barefoot through an Arcadian landscape. She looks at him, as he points to a flame burning on an altar. The text, in a heart-shaped cartouche below the image, leaves no room for doubt: 'One in soul, they do not falter / Striving for love's holy altar.' To the left and right of this heart are depictions in a much more primitive style by a different engraver. On the foundation supporting this romantic scene, an artist used thin, angular lines to portray a tiny printer's shop—a desk with a doll-like figure and sheets of paper drying on a line—and a bookshop, symbolised by bundles of paper. It is time to give these vague sketches clearer contours.

reaches the conclusion that 'bonds of affection are timeless' (A. Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love. Modes of Reproduction 1300-1840* [Oxford/New York 1986] 195; Hokke, 'Mijn alderliefste Jantielief', 73).

³¹³ *Trouwzangen*, Dzv.



8. Engraved title page of *Trouw-zangen voor den heere Pieter Blussé en mejuffrouwe Sophia Arnolda Christina Vermeer* (Dordrecht 1771). The engraving was probably taken from one of Blussé's publications. Dordrecht Municipal Archives.

CHAPTER TWO

MOVING UP IN THE WORLD. THE FIRM OF ABRAHAM BLUSSÉ & SON, C. 1771

Our virtue and trust did not wane, and we worked enthusiastically on building our family home. Unremitting diligence and thrifty consideration filled my spouse's head. Meanwhile, striving to secure and expand my business on the way paved by my father, I saw, with God's blessing, my pleasure increase and I was able to earn a great deal of favour, both near and far.

Exploring the Market. New Developments in the Book Trade in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century

International and Domestic Trade

If we can believe the book historians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the heyday of the Dutch book trade—the 'Wonder of Holland'—was already a thing of the past when Pieter Blussé took over the business from his father around 1770. The famous nineteenth-century publisher Kruseman set the tone in 1893, when he blamed the decline in the international market for French books printed in the Netherlands—a decline that took place in the second half of the eighteenth century—on the careless, nonchalant attitude of Dutch booksellers:

The old fire of the past had been extinguished, and the desire to make a fortune as easily and inexpensively as possible had taken the place of constant effort and unrelenting zeal. This lackadaisical tendency to rest on one's laurels was bound to lead to ruin. Little by little, our printers and paper manufacturers had been declining woefully, and as far as our publishers were concerned, instead of striving for sound content and a neat appearance, they were guilty of a sloppiness that could not fail to cause offence.¹

It was for this very reason that renowned foreign authors—such as Voltaire, who complained about the many printing errors in various books

¹ A.C. Kruseman, *Aanteekeningen betreffende den boekhandel van Noord-Nederland in de 17de en 18de eeuw* (Amsterdam 1893) [= *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van den Nederlandschen boekhandel* 6] 91-92.

of his that had been printed in Amsterdam—were thought to have taken their custom to French and English competitors. Even the Dutch reprints of foreign literature, once famous for their high quality, supposedly lost their good name and share of the market when they became ‘mere run-of-the-mill work’.² Kruseman was just as negative about the writing produced in his own country: ‘Our national literature did not provide much work for our printing presses in the second half of the eighteenth century, and our Republic, for its part, did very little to encourage studies in our native language. Everything had to be French, it made no difference, in the case of fashionable literature, whether it could pass muster, morally speaking: on the contrary, its ‘cavalier’ quality only served to recommend it.’³

Kruseman constantly called upon the same eye-witnesses to support his claims: the publisher–lawyer Elie Luzac, who wistfully recalled the days when ‘Dutch books surpassed all others in merit and beauty, and were preferred everywhere’,⁴ and the journal *De Koopman* (The Merchant), whose lucid observations on the state of the book trade in the 1770s were voiced by writers with pseudonyms such as Henry Misprint:

Every overgrown bookseller’s apprentice who has completed his four-year training and is still as ignorant as a pig about the business, let alone about other things, becomes a master, sets up shop, hangs out a sign, and begins, with not the slightest understanding of the business and no capital whatsoever, and so he remains, ploddingly selling his trashy tomes, his ointment for corns and salve for burns, or, worse still, aphrodisiacs and pox potions. He goes in search of a trashy writer, a salaried fame-robber, and ruins the book trade and book-learning. This deterioration has gained ground among the people: others follow suit; it’s raining rubbish and libelous writings, and true geniuses are neglected.⁵

A contemporary of Kruseman, the bookseller Van der Meulen, gratefully referred to Luzac in his historical overview when describing the decline of the book trade in the second half of the eighteenth century: ‘If anyone is still in doubt about this decline, let him travel through our provinces and towns to observe how things used to be and how they are today and then draw his own conclusions.’⁶ In this period the Dutch book trade

² Kruseman, *Aanteekeningen*, 93.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁵ See Kruseman (*ibid.* 174–76).

⁶ R. van der Meulen, *De boekenwereld. Theorie en praktijk van den boekhandel* (2nd ed.; Leiden; n.d. [c. 1897]) 70.

was thought to comprise separate domains: Dutch-language literature produced for the domestic market, and French and Latin works printed for the national and international market. 'The first of these two branches is, in a sense, the least important. ... The other, which focuses on the consumption of Latin and French works, used to be more important, but is now of scarcely any consequence.'⁷

The same view of the Dutch book trade in the second half of the eighteenth century can also be found, often with reference to the same eye-witnesses, in the writings of a number of later book historians. De Bock, for example, quoted the same passage from Voltaire as Kruseman to condemn the sloppiness of Dutch publishers of this period.⁸ His paraphrasings of contemporary complaints voiced by booksellers and publishers about the decline of their trade seem to have been taken largely from *De Koopman*. His final judgement is devastatingly simple: 'There is an undeniable decline. Respect for the book has waned.'⁹ De Vrankrijker, who quotes Voltaire and Luzac, also observed this deterioration,¹⁰ and sought its cause in the lack of entrepreneurial skills among Dutch booksellers, whom he blamed for not making enough effort to develop their own Dutch-language literature, preferring instead to reprint successful foreign books. 'The periwigged Dutchman no longer jumped at every opportunity that presented itself, because this would have brought his nicely styled curls into disarray.'¹¹

In more recent publications we still come across Luzac¹² and the jocular letter-writers of *De Koopman*, as well as the German traveller Philipp Andreas Nemnich, who around 1800 observed that most Dutch booksellers were 'of the middling sort. Among these great masses ... there are inconceivably coarse and stupid people.' It was no wonder, then, that the contemporary book trade in Holland was regarded with a certain amount of contempt.¹³ In the absence of more concrete evidence, the pronouncements of contemporaries were, and still are, put forward as evidence that the 'French', export-oriented book trade declined in the course of the eighteenth century. The only quantitative data we have at our disposal are the import and export figures compiled by the English historian Giles Barber

⁷ Van der Meulen, *Theorie en praktijk*, 69-70.

⁸ E. de Bock, *Het Nederlandse boek. Overzicht van zijn geschiedenis* (Brussels 1939) 92-93.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 95-96.

¹⁰ A.C.J. de Vrankrijker, 'Boek en mensch' in *Vijf eeuwen boek in Nederland* (Haarlem 1940) 88.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 89-90.

¹² See, among others, Van Eeghen, *De Amsterdamse boekhandel* V, 103-04.

¹³ Ton Broos, 'Misdruk en mispunt', 220.

of the trade between England and the Netherlands, which show that Dutch exports to England declined sharply around 1780, at the outbreak of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War.¹⁴ As to the causes of the alleged 'decline' of the book trade in the second half of the eighteenth century, the present-day assessment is much more balanced than that offered by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century historians. The dip is now thought to have been less severe than supposed, affecting only the production of books for the international market.

Both the flourishing of this important branch of trade in the seventeenth century and its decline in the eighteenth century are attributed in part to external factors. The strife between Catholicism and Protestantism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries caused a breach within Europe. Important European cultural centres such as Venice, Antwerp and the German cities became isolated, and the Dutch Republic—partly owing to its central location, its strong mercantile fleet and its relative freedom of the press—was in a position to take over their role.¹⁵ Moreover, Dutch booksellers profited from the Thirty Years' War, which dealt the deathblow to the German book trade,¹⁶ and from the wars between England and France, which brought the trade between these countries to a standstill.¹⁷ The religious and political disputes in a number of neighbouring countries also benefited the Dutch economy in general and the book trade in particular. The publishing world thus received a considerable boost at the end of the sixteenth century from the emigration to the North of substantial numbers of wealthy and skilled book dealers from the Southern Netherlands. A century later the French Huguenots played a similarly innovative role when they fled en masse to the Dutch Republic after the repeal of the Edict

¹⁴ O.S. Lankhorst, "'Au siècle des catalogues". Een eerste inventarisatie van fonds- en sortimentscatalogi van Haagse boekverkopers, 1680-1780', *Documentatieblad van de werkgroep 18e eeuw* 21 (1989) no. 1, 55-67.

¹⁵ G.C. Gibbs, 'The role of the Dutch Republic as the intellectuel entrepôt of Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 86 (1971) 323-49, esp. 325; P.G. Hoftijzer, *Engelse boekverkopers bij de beurs. De geschiedenis van de Amsterdamse boekhandels Bruyning and Swart, 1637-1724* (Amsterdam 1987) [= *Studies van het instituut voor intellectuele betrekkingen tussen de Westeropese landen in de moderne tijd* 16] 2-3; Chr. Berkvens-Stevelinck, 'Prosper Marchand, Frans uitgever in de Republiek (1709-1747)', *Documentatieblad van de werkgroep 18e eeuw* (1982) nos. 53-54, 59-74, esp. 59.

¹⁶ Gibbs, 'The role of the Dutch Republic', 325.

¹⁷ W.W. Mijnhardt, 'De geschiedschrijving over de ideeengeschiedenis van de 17e- en 18e-eeuwse Republiek', in W.W. Mijnhardt (ed.), *Kantelend geschiedbeeld. Nederlandse historiografie sinds 1945* (Utrecht/Antwerp 1983) 162-206, esp. 175.

of Nantes in 1685.¹⁸ Compared with the governments of other countries, the Dutch authorities interfered little with the press, which meant that for a long time the Dutch publishing world suffered no shortage of manuscripts. Such famous authors as Descartes, Rousseau, Voltaire and Hobbes had their work published in the Netherlands,¹⁹ the Mecca of writers.²⁰

The mitigation of various unfavourable circumstances elsewhere—such as the relaxation of censorship in England and France, the ending of various wars, and the economic revival in the neighbouring countries—is thought to have caused the Dutch Republic to lose its leading position.²¹ With the extinction of famous printing dynasties—immigrants such as the firms of Elzevier, Marc Michel Rey and Blaeu—the prominent, international role previously played by the book trade in the Dutch Republic seemed by the second half of the eighteenth century to have come to an end.

This decline is not thought to have had repercussions on the development of the domestic market for Dutch books—on the contrary. Even though the lack of a national bibliography of eighteenth-century printed matter still forces us to rely on the estimates made by J.A. Gruys, most

¹⁸ The 'refuge' offered to French Huguenots was equally beneficial to the development of the Dutch paper industry and journalism (Gibbs, 'The role of the Dutch Republic', 324-25; Mijnhardt, 'De geschiedschrijving', 174-75).

¹⁹ The great freedom of the press in the Dutch Republic, so highly praised by nineteenth-century historians, still obtains in present-day historiography. Nevertheless, this image has recently started to show some cracks. T. Jongenelen, for example, in his article 'Vuile boeken maken vuile handen', has attempted to prove—on the basis of several examples of the strict supervision of book production in Amsterdam—that freedom of the press was declining in the period 1750-60. It is possible that the worsening position of Dutch publications in the international market was due not only to increasing tolerance abroad but also to diminishing freedom of the press in the Republic. See T. Jongenelen, 'Vuile boeken maken vuile handen. De vervolging van persdelicten omstreeks 1760', *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse boekgeschiedenis* 2 (1995) 77-96. See also his introduction to T. Jongenelen, *Van smaad tot erger. Amsterdamse boekverboden 1747-1794* (Amsterdam 1998) [= *Abdera* 4]. This bibliography comprising 254 titles contains 154 titles not included in Knuttel's bibliography of banned books; see W.P.C. Knuttel, *Verboden boeken in de Republiek der Vereenigde Nederlanden* (The Hague 1914). Cf. I. Weekhout, *Boekencensuur in de Noordelijke Nederlanden. De vrijheid van de drukpers in de zeventiende eeuw* (The Hague 1998) 371-89. She made an inventory of 263 book bans issued by the States General, the States of Holland, the Court of Holland and the 'Gecommitteerde Raden' (Executive Committee) of the States of Holland, 117 of which do not appear in Knuttel.

²⁰ S. Groenveld, 'Het Mekka der schrijvers? Statencolleges en censuur in de zeventiende-eeuwse Republiek' in H. Duits, A.J. Gelderblom and M.B. Smits-Veldt (eds.), *Eer is de Lof des Deuchts. Opstellen over renaissance en classicisme aangeboden aan dr. Fokke Veenstra* (Amsterdam 1986) 225-46.

²¹ Mijnhardt, 'De geschiedschrijving', 173.

publications actually assume that the number of titles doubled from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century.²² Mijnhardt suggests that it was precisely the decline in the international book trade that drove booksellers to explore the domestic market more vigorously. In his view, such important eighteenth-century publishers as Tirion and Allart, who printed Dutch books almost exclusively, were the prototypes of a new generation of publishers whose activities in the domestic market were thought to be 'indicative' of 'the vitality of Dutch culture in this period'.²³ Kloek mentions even more examples of eighteenth-century 'firms of repute', including Blussé's, to underscore his proposition that in the course of the eighteenth century, the book trade in Holland 'gained irrepressible momentum'. But, as he went on to remark: 'The history of the rise of the book trade in Holland ... has yet to be written.'²⁴

To be sure, the history of the book trade in seventeenth-century Holland requires more detailed study before one can speak of an irrepressible revival of this branch of commerce in the following century. After all, recent research has shown ever more clearly that the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic also harboured publishers who devoted themselves exclusively—or nearly so—to the production of Dutch-language publications. A salient example of this is the publisher's list of Cornelis Claeszoon, which has been analysed by B. van Selm.²⁵ It is possible—as Van Selm argues in his article on Johannes van Ravesteyn, the great seventeenth-century wholesale dealer—that researchers have been so blinded by the international side of the seventeenth-century book trade that the importance of the domestic market in this period has remained in the shadows: 'The appeal of, and the trade opportunities provided by, this home market must have been great,

²² See, for instance W.W. Mijnhardt, *Tot Heil van 't Menschdom. Culturele genootschappen in Nederland, 1750-1815* (Amsterdam 1987) 83.

²³ Mijnhardt, 'De geschiedschrijving', 175.

²⁴ J.J. Klok, '1 januari 1790: A.B. Saakes start de "Lijst van nieuw uitgekomen boeken"—De modernisering van het boekbedrijf in M.A. Schenkeveld-van der Dussen (ed.), *Nederlandse literatuur een geschiedenis* (Groningen 1993) 388-95, esp. 389.

²⁵ B. van Selm, *Een menigste treffelijke boecken. Nederlandse boekhandelscatalogi in het begin van de zeventiende eeuw* (Utrecht 1987). Cf. G. Verhoeven, "En koopt er geen dan met dees fraaie Faem". De reisuittgaven van Gillis Joosten Saeghman', *Literatuur* 9 (1992) 330-39. The apparent dearth of succinct examples is due not so much to a lack of promising candidates as to the limited number of scholars doing research in this area. For instance, the Amsterdam bookseller Jan Bouman, who long published the work of the prolific writer Simon de Vries, would be an interesting subject of research. See A. Baggerman, *Een drukend gewicht. Leven en werk van de zeventiende-eeuwse veelschrijver Simon de Vries* (Amsterdam/Atlanta 1993) [= Atlantis 7] esp. 132-33, 135-38, 271-81.

for in the period under review hundreds of booksellers plied their trade in the province of Holland alone.²⁶ In Van Selm's opinion, it was not the export of books that brought about the 'Wonder of Holland', but rather the great domestic demand that made participation in the international market possible and perhaps even necessary. The use in those days of 'change'—the custom of settling accounts with colleagues both at home and abroad by paying in kind whenever possible: a page for a page and a book for a book—made it necessary to find a balance between sales to individuals at home, and purchases and sales to colleagues abroad.²⁷

Troublesome Customers: Buying Behaviour in Eighteenth-century Bookshops

Another recent assumption about the book market in the second half of the eighteenth century has also become the subject of debate. It was initially claimed that the increasing number of publications that became available in the course of the century, as well as the booksellers' new initiative of issuing lists of recent publications at regular intervals, were symptoms of a 'reading revolution'. This development was said to have been caused by a sizeable increase in the reading public and a change in their reading habits. Instead of reading and re-reading the same—chiefly religious—publications they had read in the seventeenth century, people now preferred to read greater numbers of books on a wider variety of (topical) subjects, which stimulated the development of such 'new genres' as the novel, popularising historical and geographical works, and periodicals.

Although many a book historian has delved deeply into the customer records of provincial booksellers to find evidence in support of this supposed reading revolution, this development proves difficult to substantiate. The customer records of Van Benthem in Middelburg and the sales accounts of Tijl in Zwolle show that only about 2% of the households in those cities provided these booksellers with regular customers. Their reading preferences certainly did not focus exclusively on the 'new genres', but also included the traditional religious tracts: 'the enduring foundation of the

²⁶ B. van Selm, 'Johannes van Ravesteyn, 'libraire européen' or local trader?' in C. Berkvens-Stevelinck et al. (eds.), *Le magasin de l'Univers. The Dutch Republic as the Centre of the European Booktrade* (Leiden 1992) 263. Cf. W. Frijhoff and M. Spies, *1650: Hard-Won Unity [= Dutch Culture in a European Perspective 1]* (Basingstoke/New York 2004) 257-70, which devotes a lot of attention to the domestic market.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 262.

book trade'.²⁸ What does emerge, however, is that those who regularly bought books in these shops came from various segments of urban society, and while the elite were certainly the most numerous, the middle classes were well represented too.

Another remarkable finding is the relative homogeneity of these population groups as far as their preference for certain genres was concerned. They united in reading 'the same old and new, traditional and enlightened genres'.²⁹ Theological and religious tracts—interest in which was on the wane, according to the advocates of the reading revolution—represented the lion's share (19–28%) of the reading matter purchased by all groups.³⁰ These publications ranged from the orthodox to the enlightened. In Zwolle at least, there was no sign of a great interest in novels, one of the alleged 'new genres'. Only 5–6% of 'reading budgets' were spent on literary works.³¹ Historical and geographical writings, also described in the research literature as 'upcoming genres', were far more popular in Tijl's shop, making up 22% of sales.³² But there were no bestsellers in this or any of the other genres that could be classified as 'general reading': 'types of reading matter which ... meet the need for general knowledge'.³³ Most of these publications were bought by only one or two customers.³⁴ The real bestsellers in Tijl's shop were so-called 'functional' books, such as schoolbooks, church books (such as hymnals) and almanacs. Although they represented only 30% of Tijl's total book sales, these works—along with paper and writing implements—were a stable source of income.³⁵

The largest part of Tijl's sales, however, consisted of a wide range of mostly recent publications with a quick turnover,³⁶ each of which managed to attract only a few buyers. This was the most lucrative segment of the market for this particular bookseller, but it also appears to have been his Achilles heel, if we compare the annual sales of 'functional' and 'general' titles: indeed, the turnover of 'general books' appears to have been excep-

²⁸ Brouwer, *Lezen en schrijven in de provincie*, 183.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 291.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 191.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 193. Poetry, ranging from literary volumes to occasional poetry, was very popular (*ibid.*, 196).

³² *Ibid.*, 77.

³³ *Ibid.*, 75.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 73.

³⁵ Of the Zwolle public, 55% spent money on 'non-books' (*ibid.*, 69).

³⁶ Interest in older works was described as 'unenthusiastic'. Of the titles sold by Tijl in 1777–87, 30% appeared before 1770 and 64% in the period that followed. Of the books in the latter group, 54% were published after 1776 (*ibid.*, 71–72).

tionally erratic. According to the graphs, the year 1778, with a total turnover of 528 guilders, represented a peak, whereas the turnover of 119 guilders in 1784 marked, for reasons that are unclear, an all-time low. In 1780 Tijl sold 'general' books to the tune of 440 guilders, whereas in the following year his sales of such books suddenly dropped by half.³⁷

At first glance Brouwer's findings give no reason to suspect a reading revolution, since whatever revolution Tijl was confronted with was not a profitable one. When he opened up his shop in the morning, he did not find book-hungry hordes jostling to be first inside, as suggested by the traditional meaning of 'revolution'. Instead, he encountered a small but demanding group of customers whose varied tastes—'all wanting something different and always something new'—required him to keep a wide assortment of recently published books in stock, which entailed the usual administrative headaches. After the disappointing customer figures at Van Benthem's Middelburg bookshop prompted Mijnhardt and Kloek to relegate the reading revolution 'to the rubbish bin of history', Brouwer also had to contend with a circle of customers, this time from Zwolle, who likewise refused to fit in with the theory of the reading revolution that Mijnhardt, Kloek and he himself had imported to the Netherlands from Germany. Brouwer, however, raises several objections to the 'reading revolution'—a concept which is extremely vague and therefore difficult to quantify. Is the increase of two percentage points in the reading public (from 2% to 4%) that is borne out by Brouwer's research—essentially a doubling in the number of readers—enough to be called 'revolutionary'? Or, to put it in more concrete terms: 'How many tanners and hat-makers have to buy a 'general book' at Tijl's shop ... before we are justified in speaking of a successful reading revolution?'³⁸ Nor does Brouwer fail to take a critical look at his main source of information—customer records—since these sources record only books bought on account, whereas there is increasing evidence that inexpensive reading matter in particular had to be paid for in cash.³⁹ Moreover, our view of Zwolle's reading culture is obscured by the competition among booksellers. Tijl's market position, compared with that

³⁷ Ibid., 74. Within the still-vague category of the 'general book', it is particularly the multi-volume works and periodicals that gave Tijl a certain amount of financial security, since they encouraged customer loyalty (ibid., 82, 88).

³⁸ Ibid., 38.

³⁹ H. van Goinga, 'Een blik op de praktijk van de Nederlandse boekhandel omstreeks 1785: Christoffel Frederik Koenig, uitgever van volksblaadjes, Leiden 1782-1786', *De achttiende eeuw* 25 (1993) 39-72, esp. 69.

of his much larger competitor Simon Clement, was extremely unstable. It is possible that while Tijl was devoted to the principle 'less is more',⁴⁰ Clement's business was booming. An equally thorny problem is Brouwer's finding that some of Tijl's customers also frequented other bookshops in Zwolle. The absence of the customer records kept by Tijl's competitors makes it impossible to gain an overall picture of Zwolle's book-buying public.⁴¹

Despite these unknown factors and the possibly one-sided view of the ups and downs at Tijl's bookshop in the period 1777-87, Brouwer's research definitely shows an important change in book-buying behaviour in the second half of the eighteenth century: an interest in topical subjects was becoming more noticeable among a group of readers that might already have been large and was probably growing larger. Indeed, a provincial bookseller like Tijl—who, with his wide assortment of publications, catered for a clientele with widely varying tastes and a predilection for new publications—would have been unthinkable in the seventeenth century.

Selling on Consignment

In the seventeenth century, booksellers who wanted to stock their fellow booksellers' publications were forced to exchange them for titles on their own list.⁴² To be sure, this system of exchange was simplified in the course of the seventeenth century, owing to the introduction of payment on account, but in essence this merely made the practice more sophisticated, it did not mark a fundamental change. Only booksellers who had built up a substantial list of their own were able to amass a wide assortment of publications by fellow publishers. Small booksellers who ordered books they could not afford were confronted at the end of the year with a large deficit that had to be settled in cash. But even large booksellers could find themselves with risky stock-in-trade: books acquired through exchange which subsequently proved difficult to sell could become exasperating loss-makers.⁴³

The system introduced in the eighteenth century of selling on consignment on a sale-or-return basis was a considerable improvement. It allowed

⁴⁰ Brouwer, *Lezen en schrijven*, 145.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁴² On the distribution network of the seventeenth-century book trade, see Frijhoff and Spies, *1650 Bevochten eendracht*, 264.

⁴³ See Van Goinga, "Alom te bekomen". *Veranderingen in de boekdistributie in de Republiek 1725-1770*, 55-87.

smaller booksellers like Tijn to order books from fellow book dealers at almost no financial risk. Unsold books could be sent back to the publisher a year (or even two or three) later. Van Goinga distinguishes between several types of selling on consignment: the unsolicited sending of goods on consignment; goods sent on approval, with the understanding that unwanted items should be returned within a few weeks; and, however paradoxical it may sound, consignments of 'welcome but unordered' goods.⁴⁴ In the last-mentioned case, booksellers informed certain publishers that they would be willing to sell anything they published on consignment. An agreement of this kind was advantageous to both parties: publishers no longer had to wait for orders before taking action, and were able to extend their distribution networks considerably; dealers were automatically kept abreast of the latest books, which they could display in their shop windows soon after publication. This innovation, however, had one drawback for large publishers and large booksellers alike: the entire responsibility had to be shouldered by publishers who long remained in uncertainty about a particular title's turnover and were sometimes reunited, years later, with consignments of well-thumbed books that were no longer topical. More and more sales outlets meant that established booksellers were increasingly confronted with competition from petty tradesmen who could set up a small bookshop with practically no capital. This puts a whole new perspective on the oft-quoted passage from *De Koopman* – 'Every overgrown bookseller's apprentice ... becomes a master, sets up shop, hangs out a sign ...' ⁴⁵

Similar observations crop up more often in the contemporary literature. After visiting a number of Dutch towns, the German traveller Grabner sneered at the lamentable quality of Dutch bookshops, of which he found no shortage:

Every bookbinder who sells catechisms and schoolbooks, yet still earns his living mainly by selling pens, sealing wax and writing paper, joins the booksellers' guild and promptly hangs above his front door a large black sign boasting the title of 'Bookseller' in gold letters. Thus every street in the

⁴⁴ H. Van Goinga, 'Alom te bekomen', 70-71.

⁴⁵ This observation is confirmed by L. Leuven's research into the development of the Catholic book trade in Amsterdam. She ascertained an increase in the number of firms with Catholic owners in the second half of the eighteenth century. The newcomers were generally small-scale businesses, however, whereas larger firms found it increasingly difficult to keep going. See L. Leuven, *De boekhandel te Amsterdam door Katholieken gedreven tijdens de Republiek* (Epe 1951) 45, 53.

country is teeming with booksellers, but there is still not a single Nicolai or Breitkopf to be found in the entire Republic.⁴⁶

These laments, which by the end of the eighteenth century had almost become a literary *topos*, are an indirect indication that selling on consignment had become increasingly popular. An even clearer indication of how widespread the practice had become is provided by the stock of bankrupt booksellers, since most of these books had to be returned to the publishers.⁴⁷ One example is the Amsterdam bookseller Jan Mens, who in 1800 had in his bookshop fifty-one bound books (including many multi-volume works) and 11,229 guilders' worth of goods on consignment, which had been supplied by thirty-seven different publishers.⁴⁸ His fellow townsman Jacob van Woensel, who died the same year as Mens, was one of the smaller booksellers, to judge from his stock. His shop contained—in addition to a folding table, a mirror on a stand, a reading-desk, a small cupboard, a tea-chest, a tobacco-box, four footstoves, 'a few printed books' and 'a small counter'—5,063 guilders' worth of goods on consignment, which had been supplied by eighty-seven different publishers, forty of whom were based outside Amsterdam.⁴⁹

The cunning ways in which some publishers tried, from the early 1760s onwards, to avoid trading on consignment also reveals that this form of trade had become the most common practice among booksellers. Van Goinga points out the increasing tendency of publishers, which emerges from newspaper advertisements, to insist on cash payment for sought-after or expensive volumes. She also sees the increase in the number of subscription editions in this light, considering such practices an attempt on the part of publishers to avoid the financial risks of supplying booksellers with goods on consignment. These trends proved to be irreversible, however. Even the national meeting held in 1801, at which thirty-two large publishers tried to implement measures aimed at stimulating cash payment, seems to have had little effect.⁵⁰ Their suggestion was to hold a large annual book sale at which outstanding accounts could be settled, defaulters could be pilloried, and publishers would have the opportunity to show their newest publications to fellow publishers. This would enable publishers to sell en-

⁴⁶ J. Grabner, *Brieven over de Vereenigde Nederlanden* (2 vols; Haarlem 1792) II, 415-16.

⁴⁷ On this subject, see GAA, *Desolate boedelkamer* (file 5072).

⁴⁸ GAA, *Desolate boedelkamer*, inv. 1072, no. 3409.

⁴⁹ GAA, *Desolate boedelkamer*, inv. 1071, no. 3399.

⁵⁰ On this subject, see H. van Goinga, 'Meer dan halve bottels: de vergadering van Nederlandse boekverkopers in 1801', *De boekenwereld* 9 (1992-93) 222-34.

tire editions in one fell swoop, save them a great deal of expense and effort, and protect them from financial risks. This system would be made attractive to customers by giving them a much higher discount than was previously customary. Instead of the usual 16–20%,⁵¹ a 25% discount was suggested, and several percent more for cash purchases. Nothing more was heard of this committee—of which Pieter Blussé was a member—which had been set up to develop these and other plans. It was late in the nineteenth century before cash payment would become the norm in transactions between fellow publishers.⁵²

Selling on consignment led to another important innovation: the system of ‘main correspondents’. To facilitate distribution and spare themselves a lot of paperwork, many publishers began in the eighteenth century to work with depot-holders, or agents, who kept large stocks of one or more of their fellow publishers’ publications, and dealt with orders, shipments and billing. Most of these agents were located in Amsterdam, the centre of the book trade in the Dutch Republic. Van Goinga tracked down evidence of such distributive trade by means of newspaper advertisements. Not all publishers made such a clear distinction as Abraham Blussé, who in 1755 informed potential customers in an advertisement that his books ‘can be obtained everywhere’ and explicitly tells his fellow booksellers where they can place their orders at purchase price: ‘N.B. Booksellers in provincial towns can send for the aforementioned books, also in quantities, [from] Onder de Linden and F. Houttuyn in Amsterdam, or Louis Taillefert in Middelburg.’⁵³ For insiders the advertisements placed by other publishers were no less clear, for if they stated that their books could ‘also be obtained’ somewhere, this was a reference, in eighteenth-century parlance, to wholesale distributors.⁵⁴

The findings of research into developing distribution networks and possible changes in purchasing behaviour as shown by Tijl’s customer records point to some extent in the same direction: a public more and more interested in topical subjects, and bent on broadening their horizons. Eighteenth-century readers—who craved novelties and had highly individual tastes, as demonstrated from the clientele who frequented Tijl’s bookshop in

⁵¹ Ibid. Van Goinga based her research on nineteenth-century data. My research has shown that, at least in Blussé’s case, discounts of 10% were common.

⁵² Van Goinga, ‘Meer dan halve bottels’, 225.

⁵³ *Amsterdamsche Courant* (hereafter abbreviated to AC), 8 May 1755. As quoted in Van Goinga, ‘Alom te bekomen’, 79.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 80.

Zwolle—could now be served better and faster, thanks to improved channels of distribution. Yet here, too, the extremely respectable Middelburg clientele of Van Benthem, who were Mijnhardt and Kloek's object of study, threaten to throw a spanner in the works. The 'majority' of them 'seldom or never' bought anything other than books of a 'cast-iron' functional nature. Only a few were interested in non-religious 'edifying reading'—in particular, recent history and travel accounts—but in general they could not be called 'truly avid consumers'. Both researchers therefore conclude that there was no real broadening of reading behaviour in the eighteenth century. In short, after Mijnhardt and Kloek's attack on the quantitative underpinnings of the reading-revolution theory, its qualitative foundation also threatened to collapse under the weight of the evidence produced by Van Benthem's clientele.

Van Goinga, in her article on selling on consignment, avoids a direct confrontation, but her conclusion is diametrically opposed to previous claims: 'The unsolicited and the solicited consignment trade ... [could] be introduced structurally only if the advantages for everyone concerned were greater than the disadvantages. The most important prerequisite was the presence of a book-buying public for whom reading newly published books had become a routine part of life.'⁵⁵ She thus re-introduced the theory of a reading revolution, though she ushers it in through the supplier's door. Other structural developments in the book trade also point to the increased consumption of literature in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Auctions, the Antiquarian Book Trade and Remainders

Eighteenth-century readers satisfied their hunger for books not only by frequenting respectable shops like Tijl's and Van Benthem, but also by bidding at the many book auctions, where they often paid much less for the same books. Van Goinga calculated that in the period 1721-70, booksellers organised 1,172 public auctions of bound books in Leiden alone.⁵⁶ In contrast to book dealers' auctions, where bound and unbound books were traded among booksellers, there were public sales of bound books that were open to booksellers and private individuals alike.

⁵⁵ Van Goinga, "Alom te bekomen", 84. This is also the conclusion that appears, though less explicitly, in her dissertation (Van Goinga, *Alom te bekomen*, 287-310).

⁵⁶ See Van Goinga, *Alom te bekomen*, 201, which includes records up to 1805 and the accompanying turnover.

Contrary to what has until recently been assumed (on the basis of information gleaned from the title pages of sale catalogues), by no means did books sold at auction all come from private collections. Closer study has shown that these books also came from the shelves of the bookseller organising the sale or from the stock of fellow booksellers. In more than half the public auctions held in Leiden between 1736 and 1770, for example, the goods on sale came in part from booksellers who seized such opportunities—these auctions were permitted only once or twice a year—to rid themselves of their stock. Evidently such auctions were so lucrative that publishers even went so far as to have unbound sheets bound so that they could mingle ‘incognito’ with the other goods on offer.

The many complaints made by booksellers’ guilds to the authorities reveal that by no means were all book dealers enthusiastic about this potential outlet. The low prices for which books were usually sold at these auctions were blamed for endangering the income of bookshops and leading to a general fall in prices. In the eyes of the Leiden town council, which had established a liberal policy towards public auctions as early as 1669, it was precisely these lower prices that were an overriding factor: they put books within reach of those who could otherwise not afford them, such as students and members of the middle class.⁵⁷ In The Hague, too, the auction system was able to flourish because the town council imposed few restrictions on the booksellers who organised such public sales.⁵⁸

Amsterdam, however, had to wait until 1769 for the lifting of a 1663 ban that had prevented booksellers from auctioning off their own stock. Before that time, however, they had ingeniously evaded the regulations by adding large quantities of their wares to the goods sold at auctions of private collections, even though this was not stated on the title page of the sale catalogue.⁵⁹ A regulation pertaining to sales in Amsterdam—which stipulated that only the books of individuals from Amsterdam could be sold at public auction in the city—was also circumvented by holding auctions just outside the city limits.⁶⁰ Even the respectable bookseller’s son Pieter Blussé—who showed his best side during a stay in Amsterdam in 1767 by testifying, before the senior officers of the booksellers’ guild, to a number of offences

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 137–39.

committed by Stephanus Jacobus Baalde—appears not to have been entirely blameless.

Baalde was accused of ignoring the ban when he proceeded with an auction of unbound books, including many clandestine volumes from fellow booksellers outside Amsterdam. By moving the venue at the last minute to ‘the “200 Roeden” outside the Haarlemmerpoort’—a tavern just outside the city gate on the road to Haarlem—he thought he would be in the clear. But despite the precautions he took to keep away spies—such as the servant of Schouten the bookseller, who was denied entrance and told that ‘no Judases like him were wanted here’⁶¹—he appears to have overlooked something. After the auction he was summoned to appear before the senior officers of the guild, and who should turn up but Pieter Blussé and Pierre Tartara, who swore that they had witnessed the auction with their own eyes.⁶² Baalde should have smelled a rat when Schouten’s assistant arrived, and again when Loveringh’s manager, Pieter Blussé, showed up to pay his respects. After all, Blussé had a bone to pick with Baalde after the latter’s earlier disclosures of Blussé’s own clandestine auctions, not to mention the bitter quarrel between Baalde and Pieter’s father about the Dutch translation of an encyclopaedic work.⁶³

The fluctuation Van Goinga observed in the numbers of, and proceeds from, auctions of bound books held in Leiden over the years led her to conclude that until the 1770s the auction system reacted unfailingly to the prevailing economic situation. For example, the number of auctions and their proceeds decreased considerably during the general economic malaise of the 1750s, while the economic revival in 1760 was accompanied by an eightfold increase in profits compared with previous years. During the 1770s, however, this synchronicity disappeared. The economic crisis of 1772–73 was not reflected by the sales figures in Leiden, where auctions continued to show an increase in profits into the 1780s. She attributes this anomaly to a fundamental change in the interest shown in books as cultural assets, an interest which supposedly expressed itself in a sharp increase in the number of people reading both new and second-hand books. This explanation is rather disappointing, however, the more so because she also seeks a reason for the decline in public auctions after 1786 in the nature

⁶¹ Van Eeghen, *De Amsterdamse boekhandel* IV, 269.

⁶² KVBBB, Boekhandelsgilde Amsterdam, inv. 57, no. 22.

⁶³ The publication in question was a translation of the four-volume *A new and compleat dictionary of arts and sciences* announced in 1766 by Abraham Blussé, which Baalde complained about twice (KVBBB, Boekhandelsgilde Amsterdam, inv. 83, nos. 75 and 76).

of readers' interests, which in this case focused increasingly on topical literature. Accordingly, the book trade supposedly capitalised on this by introducing large-scale selling on consignment and a division between sellers of new books and those who specialised in antiquarian material. She mentions in this context the Amsterdam bookseller Pieter van Damme (1727-1806), one of the first dealers in rare antiquarian books and manuscripts, whose active acquisition policy enabled him to profit from the growing passion for collecting displayed by a small, elite group of 'amateurs'.⁶⁴

The occurrence of two revolutions in the reading culture—both of which could be called fundamental—within the space of only a few years is rather unlikely. The picture emerges of a typical reader who suddenly and inexplicably began to gorge himself on a hotchpotch of old and new books, only to metamorphose in double-quick time into a gourmet with a preference for new titles and a bibliophile's penchant for second-hand books. It seems more logical to link the two phenomena—both the rise and fall of public auctions—taking as our guideline the increasing focus on topical writings and the rise of selling on consignment.

Van Goinga previously suggested that the growth of the auction system in the 1770s indicated massive clearance sales of large stocks of second-hand and outdated books, but in the same paragraph she mercilessly rejects this option. After all, for years booksellers had been in a position to sell off their stock at auctions.⁶⁵ The fact that they had this opportunity, however, does not necessarily mean that they availed themselves of it. It seems plausible that this potential outlet for books—where payments were made in cash but the prices were lower—was exploited by more and more booksellers as the older titles in their stock became less marketable owing to readers' changing tastes. The sharp rise in the number of auctions held in the 1770s could indicate that the turning point came precisely during this period, in which case the decline in the number of auctions held after 1785 is not indicative of another turning point but is attributable instead to more practical reasons: the large stocks of outdated books had disappeared and new surpluses had not yet accumulated. One of the advantages of selling on consignment was that remainders could be sent back to the publisher.

This, of course, did not solve the problem of stock accumulation for the supplier/publisher—on the contrary—and one may also ask how bargain

⁶⁴ Van Goinga, *Alom te bekomen*, 207-28.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 204.

hunters satisfied their craving for books at public auctions after 1785. Although systematic research has not yet been done into the remainders trade, there are signs that in the second half of the eighteenth century this new specialism was developing next to the trade in new and antiquarian books. Because publishers were reluctant to offer their outdated volumes at lower prices to the general public—for one reason because it could damage their reputation for reliability—quite a few of them contributed their surpluses to auctions of unbound books that were open to colleagues only. Their fellow booksellers could then sell some books so inexpensively that they could make their customers happy without suffering losses themselves. The popularity of this marketing method is apparent from the records kept by the Amsterdam booksellers' guild, which mention at least ten 'unbound auctions' in Amsterdam every year after 1769, with the peak coming in 1776, a year that saw seventeen auctions of the old stock of twenty-six booksellers. It seems, in fact, that some booksellers even began to specialise in this segment of the market. In newspaper advertisements of marked-down books, Van Goinga noticed a few names that turn up time and again: David Weege, T. Craijenschot, the firm of Harrevelt, Petrus Schouten and Martinus de Bruyn, and even Stephanus Jacobus Baalde, whose 'unbound auctions' got him into trouble in the 1760s when Pieter Blussé caught him in the act and testified against him before the guild.

If we take another look at the above-mentioned ways of acquiring books, we cannot help suspecting that research into readers' preferences and estimates of the size of the reading public based on the information in customer records affords an extremely narrow view of the eighteenth-century reading culture. In addition to the distortion Brouwer pointed out in his research—disloyal customers and unrecorded cash purchases—it appears that in the eighteenth century booksellers began to engage in a number of additional activities that cannot be gleaned from their customer records: auctioning off their stock-in-trade and second-hand books, entering the emerging market for antiquarian books, and selling off remainders of outdated stock.

It is highly unlikely that such modernisation of the book trade could have taken place in a static market, since this would mean that booksellers and publishers were investing in a better and more extensive distribution network with no prospect of increased sales. Such altruism is too much to expect of dealers, even those of the idealistic eighteenth century. In the absence of additional sources such as customer records, in which individuals can be identified, we must continue to ask which readers were

responsible for the expansion of the market. Did traditional customers simply read more and embrace a wider range of subjects? Did new readers join their ranks? Were there perhaps different markets for different income groups, just as nowadays bestsellers hot from the press are reserved for those with more money, and the less well-off must bide their time until the book is marked down in price, appears in an inexpensive paperback edition, or can be checked out of the library. In other words, how large was a bookseller's potential market in the second half of the eighteenth century? When Pieter Blussé took over his father's firm in 1770, was he confronted with an upper crust of wealthy individuals whose reading needs dominated the book market and below them a much broader segment of the population who did not participate in the world of books, either because they could not afford them or because they were uninterested in reading or both? Did the two groups perhaps form separate markets with their own preferences and their own channels of acquisition? Research into book ownership and the advent of libraries—where people could improve their minds at far less expense—might prove useful in answering these questions.

Inheriting, Borrowing and Stealing

The research carried out by De Kruif into book ownership in The Hague as reflected in the books listed in estate inventories covers a much wider section of the population than research based on customer records, because she also studied the inventories of people too poor to be taxpayers.⁶⁶ Her excursion through randomly selected, Hague houses of mourning—whose occupants died between 1750 and 1800—led to the remarkable conclusion that books were lacking in only 25% of these estates.⁶⁷

Even so, one should not have great expectations of such book ownership: 37% of the inventories listed between one and ten books. These might have been households with only one Bible, kept as a showpiece on a reading-desk, or families with a modest collection of mainly religious reading. This inequality in book ownership did not necessarily bear a direct relation to the book owner's social class. Even though the chances of encountering large book collections increased in accordance with the owners' wealth,

⁶⁶ The proletariat was an exception. See J. de Kruif, "En nog enige boeken van weinig waarde". Boeken in Haagse boedelinventarissen halverwege de 18de eeuw', *Historisch tijdschrift Holland* 26 (1994) nos. 4-5, 314-28.

⁶⁷ De Kruif, *Liefhebbers en gewoontelezers*, 98.

De Kruif also found large collections in more humble households. Class did not seem to affect book owners' preferences for certain genres. On the other hand, the size of the collection and the owner's religion were responsible for the prominence of certain genres in large book collections.⁶⁸

De Kruif employed the method of cluster analysis to uncover the following pattern: the owners of small book collections were overrepresented in the group possessing religious titles only.⁶⁹ When a collection included other genres besides religious works, the owner was likely to show a partiality for Dutch history and geography.⁷⁰ On the other hand, philosophy and the natural sciences failed to appeal to most Hague residents.⁷¹ Law, politics and government were better represented, but these genres were popular mainly in diplomatic circles.

Although the percentages and their interpretation vary, the results of the research into Van Benthem's customers around 1800, Tijl's around 1780, and Hague readers between 1750 and 1800 display a number of similarities. These readers' preferences for particular genres roughly correspond, but not as regards a penchant for novels and stories.⁷² In the case of both booksellers, works on theology and history/geography score higher than the other genres—in Zwolle 26% as opposed to 22%, and in Middelburg 17.8% versus 18.1%—just as they did among the Hague readers. The researchers do not agree about how closely people's income brackets are linked to their preferences for specific genres. Kloek and Mijnhardt observe that 'the social class or wealth of the buyer was of little value in predicting their buying habits',⁷³ and present a so-called 'carrot model': seen on a graph, the reading public supposedly takes the shape of a carrot that 'does not completely fill the top and whose tip reaches deep down'.⁷⁴ Brouwer goes even further by claiming that 'reading, as well as the buying of reading matter ... [seem] to be outside the realm of social requirement and to be swayed by individual interests'.⁷⁵ De Kruif voices a number of criticisms as well.

⁶⁸ Using cluster analysis she found a specific group of 'devout readers' from all walks of life, who owned religious books almost exclusively. She suggests that they were members of a 'pietistic sub-culture' (ibid., 175-79, 265).

⁶⁹ Ibid., 172.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 175.

⁷¹ Ibid., 183.

⁷² Only 7% of Tijl's customers, as opposed to 14.1% of Van Benthem's, spent money on literature.

⁷³ Kloek and Mijnhardt, 'In andermans boeken is het duister lezen', 24.

⁷⁴ Kloek and Mijnhardt, *Leescultuur in Middelburg*, 90.

⁷⁵ H. Brouwer, *Lezen en schrijven in de provincie*, 292.

The general picture that emerges from her findings—despite all the exceptions to the rule—is an unmistakable ‘correlation ... the lower the burial-tax bracket, the fewer the books’.⁷⁶ According to De Kruif, the resulting misconception—as though individual preference, rather than income, was the determining factor in book ownership—is apparently caused by the drawbacks of researching customer records, in which the only clue to a customer’s wealth is his profession or the offices he held. De Kruif’s research, by contrast, is based on burial-tax records.

As far as the numbers of readers are concerned, De Kruif’s findings differ greatly from the picture that emerges from customer records. The figures from The Hague—where 75% of all residents possessed one or more books and 38% more than ten—contrast sharply with those from Middelburg, where only 15–20% of the population owned one or more books.⁷⁷ This huge difference might have been caused by the breadth of De Kruif’s sample group, which gave readers in the lower social circles more opportunity to make their presence felt. Moreover, the picture was undoubtedly distorted to some extent because estate inventories include the books inherited from ancestors, and thus reflect the tastes of earlier generations.

Commercial lending libraries also provided an opportunity for the endless recycling of books. In the Republic such libraries—founded by book dealers as a sideline—arose in the mid-eighteenth century, starting in 1750 with the Hague library of Hendrik Scheurleer. As emerges from several surviving catalogues, the number of titles from which readers could choose ranged from 2,000 to 6,000, a large part of which were novels.⁷⁸ If we compare the membership fees—which varied from 6 to 16 guilders a year—to the average wage of an unskilled labourer who earned about 7 guilders a week, these libraries do not seem to have targeted destitute readers. On the other hand, readers who made use of these libraries spent far less money on their reading matter than they would have if they had bought it new. In

⁷⁶ Ibid., 103.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 83. Brouwer’s dissertation contains no such estimate.

⁷⁸ The Hague librarian Hendrik van Bakhuyzen even produced a separate catalogue which included ‘more than 500 of the best and newest historical romances, miscellaneous works and monthly journals’. See H. van Goinga, ‘“Vercierde historien”: een verkenning naar de commerciële leesbibliotheken in de Republiek in de 18e eeuw’ in K. van der Horst, P.A. Koolmees and A. Monna (eds.), *Over beesten en boeken. Opstellen over de geschiedenis van de diergeneeskunde en de boekwetenschap*, 283–98, 291. The library run by Bakhuyzen’s fellow townsman Jacques Détune consisted of ‘1,000 books, 900 novels’ (ibid., 292). Willem Elevelt’s lending library, which is said to have had ‘2,000 books’, was also graced with a ‘collection of more than 700 novels’ (ibid., 294).

the least expensive library one could enjoy unlimited reading for a whole year for the price of two volumes of poetry, or, in the most expensive libraries, for the price of three travel accounts—and for a modest fee one could even borrow the books and take them home to read.

The little that is known about the social background of the borrowing public comes from research carried out into the customer records kept by Tijl and Van Benthem, both of whose bookshops also housed libraries. The conclusions of these researchers, namely that the people who frequented lending libraries were no different in terms of social background and literary taste from the buying public, seem to go much further than their sources allow. Neither the Middelburg nor the Zwolle research in this field yielded figures or percentages. It is possible that the bookshop library was too limited a sideline for bookseller and researcher alike to warrant the keeping of accounts. Brouwer, for example, when enumerating Tijl's many sidelines, remarks that book loans were 'usually recorded without specification'. The accounts contain brief entries such as 'for the reading of books'.⁷⁹ One wonders, therefore, on what basis he reaches the conclusion, 150 pages later, that inasmuch as moderate consumers were interested in 'general books', they almost always obtained them from the library.⁸⁰

As emerges from my own study of the activities at the Dordrecht Public Library (Dordtse Nutsbibliotheek) around 1800, libraries could do a roaring business, but perhaps only if they were free. Indeed, the stampede occasioned by the opening of this free reading establishment and the fights that broke out between readers vying for the same books were so violent that the committee decided that books would henceforth be lent out only under police supervision.⁸¹ Since quite a few readers made less of a distinction between 'lending' and 'taking' than the committee had hoped, this library eventually fell victim to its own success.

The enthusiastic and, in the committee's view, often shabbily dressed would-be-readers who came to blows over the books they wanted were apparently not troubled by the inability to make a selection from the books on offer. Nevertheless, the most recent insights into the reading culture of the period would have us believe that it was the inadequate literary socialisation of potential new readers that blocked their entry to the world

⁷⁹ Brouwer, *Lezen en schrijven*, 61.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁸¹ GAD, Departement Dordrecht van de Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen, inv. 1.

of 'educational reading' (works on science, art and matters of taste).⁸² In other words, the rise in the number of books published and the lack of opportunity to find out more about them meant that only the traditional group of readers—those who were sufficiently educated to venture into the ever-expanding and complex market of 'general books'—began to read more extensively. The other readers, in their 'non-socialized' helplessness, are thought to have confined themselves to the more accessible 'functional literature': how-to books, almanacs, pieces written for special occasions, handbooks and religious works for everyday use. This *embarras du choix* was supposedly responsible, at least in part, for the sharp rise in the number of reading societies in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In these reading circles, which were bound by strict rules of conduct and headed by a director, books bought from a collective fund circulated among the members, who rallied round an experienced reader chosen to lead them safely across the 'somewhat precarious terrain' of educational books.⁸³ These societies, however 'useful and congenial', were supposedly not a breeding ground for new groups of readers—readers from the stereotypical 'rising bourgeoisie'—but served instead as support for the traditional group of readers.⁸⁴ The extant membership lists allegedly reveal that 'the core' lay 'in the border area between the upper middle classes and the elite'.⁸⁵ These were the readers said to be responsible for the advance of the 'new' genres, which for a long time were wrongly labelled as typically bourgeois. At the same time, as Kloek and Mijnhardt stress in another article, these reading circles exerted a conservative influence on book production, since individual reading preferences were neutralised by the communal acquisition policies of these societies. The result was thought to be a purchasing policy that shunned experimentation, so that publishers succumbed to the temptation to seek 'a relatively risk-free and peaceful existence' by pursuing a publishing policy that catered for the preferences of this group, which contained a large part of the habitual

⁸² J.J. Kloek, 'De lezer als burger. Het literaire publiek in de achttiende eeuw', *De achttiende eeuw* 26 (1994) 177–91. See also J.J. Kloek and W.W. Mijnhardt, 'Lezersrevolutie of literaire socialisatie?' in J. Goedegebuure (ed.), *Nieuwe wegen in taal- en literatuurwetenschap. Handelingen van het eenenveertigste filologencongres* (Tilburg 1993) 211–24.

⁸³ Kloek, 'De lezer als burger', 190.

⁸⁴ Cf. J. van Goinga-van Driel, 'Nuttig en aangenaam: leesgezelschappen in 18e eeuws Leiden' in J.A.A.M. Biemans, E. Braches and W.R.H. Koops (eds.), *Boeken verzamelen: opstellen aangeboden aan Mr. J.R. de Groot bij zijn afscheid als bibliothecaris der Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden* (Leiden 1983) 165–81.

⁸⁵ Kloek, 'De lezer als burger', 189.

readers.⁸⁶ This new hypothesis, later stated so persuasively by Kloek—‘it is not that eighteenth-century citizens emerge as readers, but rather that eighteenth-century readers emerge as citizens’—needs to be refuted.⁸⁷

Marketing and Publicity

Kloek and Mijnhardt base their hypothesis on the assumption that eighteenth-century publishers offered few opportunities to readers outside the cultural elite to become acquainted with recent publications. The reviews in literary journals were informative but relatively high-brow, in their view, and the role played by commercial libraries in making educational writings accessible to new readers should not be overestimated either, in the light of their findings from Zwolle and Middelburg. The limited amount of information on book-borrowing behaviour in both cities has been discussed above. Moreover, by dwelling on two means of acquiring information, they overlooked a number of other channels used by publishers and booksellers to inform potential clients of what was on offer.⁸⁸

For instance, prospectuses announcing new publications and titles acquired from a competitor’s list usually offered summaries of the books in question, to whet the reader’s appetite, and also gave some indication of the target group. The same was true of the printed introductions to subscription lists and the introductions bound into the front of books. Even the wordy style of eighteenth-century titles generally offered a brief characterisation of the contents. Perhaps the title pages of respectable literary novels—which, according to Kloek and Mijnhardt, were spurned by the lower segments of Middelburg society but frequently purchased by reading societies—were not informative enough for the unschooled reader. The titles of novellas, however, were generally crystal clear. After all, the help

⁸⁶ J.J. Kloek and W.W. Mijnhardt, ‘Negentiende-eeuwse leescultuur’, *De Negentiende eeuw* 14 (1990), 118.

⁸⁷ Kloek, ‘De lezer als burger’, 191.

⁸⁸ In another article Kloek and Mijnhardt examine other possibilities, but consider their importance limited, since the display in the shop appears to have had little influence on the books chosen by Van Benthem’s customers. It emerges from Van Benthem’s customer records that many books were bought on order before they became available in the shop, which argues for the importance of catalogues as a source of information, although this possibility, too, is put into perspective: ‘by no means was all reading matter announced in prospectuses by the prominent booksellers ... presumably it was mainly the more expensive, scholarly and generally informative works for which [such publicity] paid off. Of course it remains unclear how customers found out about the books they ordered. Even though Saake’s *Naamlijst van Nederduitsche boeken* could be consulted in bookshops, it offered no information on the books’ contents (Kloek, ‘Lezersrevolutie of literaire socialisatie’, 216–17).



9. Scheffersplein c. 1877. The firm of Blussé & Van Braam was housed in the fourth building from the left. In this year Vincent van Gogh worked here for several months as a booksellers' assistant. It is the same building in which Abraham Blussé Sr established his bookshop in 1745 (in those days the square was called De Beurs, but was renamed Scheffersplein in 1862, when the statue of the artist Ary Scheffer was unveiled). Photograph, Dordrecht Municipal Archives.



10. Enlargement of part of the same photograph, which affords a glimpse of the display window of this bookshop.

of a literary expert was certainly not required to understand what happened 'between a Hussar officer and a lady, both inside and outside a carriage, from ten thirty in the morning until ten in the evening'.⁸⁹

Readers could glean the necessary information from introductions and title pages in bookshops, where many of the titles in stock were available as bound copies on the shelves or in the display window, and where prospectuses and subscription lists served as eye-catching advertisements for the publications on offer. Even before entering the shop, customers could get an idea of the most recent publications: a depiction of Van Benthem's bookshop shows its window plastered with title pages. The booksellers, too, in spite of all the complaints in the contemporary literature about their ignorance and stupidity, were no doubt useful sources of information. It is precisely these objections to a number of 'uncouth and uneducated' booksellers⁹⁰—or people who called themselves booksellers, but 'far from possessing general knowledge of the works of the most important authors, knew almost nothing about them, apart from the titles and the prices'⁹¹—which illustrate the high standards book dealers were expected to meet. Booksellers who stationed themselves behind the counter 'like mastiffs, scaring off buyers with a surly scowl and blatant ignorance,' instead of coaxing potential buyers inside by adopting 'a courteous demeanour' and offering them 'useful information about books',⁹² apparently failed to live up to the norm.

In short, once one dared to set foot inside a bookshop, it was theoretically possible to make enquiries galore. The question remains, of course, whether the threshold of the eighteenth-century bookshop was sufficiently low to entice potential readers from new groups to venture inside. This does not hold true, however, for customers who did in fact frequent Van Benthem's and Tijl's bookshops but merely purchased books of a functional nature. It seems likely that their choice of functional rather than general books depended much more on their cost-benefit analysis than

⁸⁹ The complete title reads as follows: *Kort, maar interessant verhaal, van 't voorgevalenen tusschen één Huzaaren officier en ééne dame, zo in het rijtuig, als daar buiten, van 's morgens elf tot 's avonds tien uren, op hun togtje van Leijden naar Utrecht* (Leiden, B. Pret 1795) (Buisman no. 2302, 399).

⁹⁰ Broos, 'Misdruk en mispunt', 220.

⁹¹ C.J.P. de Boyer d'Argens, *Philozofische droomen, of oordeelkundige aanmerkingen, over de gewoontens, zeden en gevoelens der hedendaagsche waereld* ('s Hertogenbosch, n.d., [c. 1750]) 125.

⁹² Ibid.

on a shortage of information. People who have little to spend must set priorities.

There are a number of indications that booksellers were actively engaged in attracting new customers. An early example is a marketing strategy employed in 1756 by Abraham Blussé, who had the first issues of his periodical *De verstandige snapsters* (The Clever Gossips) distributed free of charge.⁹³ Other strategies to boost trade were employed as well, as Brouwer noticed in Zwolle. Publishers often established monopoly rights to the distribution of their own publications, particularly the successful ones. Neither was it unusual for out-of-town publishers to grant exclusive rights for the sale of their titles to a fellow publisher in another city.⁹⁴

The book dealer from Holland who around 1750 discusses practices common in the book trade with a fellow bookseller from Paris in a Dutch translation and adaptation of C.J.P. Boyers d'Argens' *Philozofische Droomen* (Philosophical Dreams) draws attention to a more aggressive sales tactic employed by established booksellers: the unsolicited sending of new publications to private individuals. In defence of this method, he says that it is used 'to serve the customers better', but the Parisian suspects a number of less altruistic motives, including booksellers' attempts to steal one another's customers: 'The moment booksellers publish a book, one sees everywhere various helpful souls, rushing out of the bookshops like so many postmen eager to outdo each other and distribute the book everywhere before anyone gets wind of it.' The picture painted by this literary source is much more dynamic than the stock illustration of the tidy interior of the Amsterdam bookseller Pieter Meyer Warnars, which shows a customer with a top hat and cane, leaning stiffly with one hand on the counter, earnestly conferring with two shop assistants standing behind the counter with their backs to a tall bookcase full of leather-bound volumes in neat rows.⁹⁵

Still, it must be asked to what extent those shop assistants of Boyers d'Argens—rushing around clutching the latest editions—and his Dutch translator A.B. sketch a faithful picture of common bookselling practices.

⁹³ On this subject, see S. van Dijk and D. Helmers, 'Nederlandse vrouwentijdschriften in de achttiende eeuw' in J.J. Kloek and W.W. Mijnhardt, *Balans en perspectief van de Nederlandse cultuurgeschiedenis. De productie, distributie en consumptie van cultuur* (Amsterdam 1991) 71-88, 77-78, 82.

⁹⁴ Brouwer, *Lezen en schrijven*, 64.

⁹⁵ On the cover of R. Wittmann, *Geschichte des Deutschen Buchhandels* (Munich 1991) and in O.S. Lankhorst and P.G. Hoftijzer, *Drukkers, boekverkopers en lezers in Nederland tijdens de Republiek. Een historiografische en bibliografische handleiding* (The Hague 1995) 115.

The translator/editor was, in any case, a man well-acquainted with what was going on in the book trade in those years. The only author known to have published under the initials A.B. is in fact the Dordrecht bookseller, publisher and—when the opportunity arose—translator, Abraham Blussé.⁹⁶ The conversation quoted above was followed by a remark about the alleged abuse of *stadspakketten*: a system whereby book parcels were transported from city to city. This does not seem to be a literary exaggeration, in view of the arguments that spiced up the monthly meetings of the Middelburg booksellers' guild: 'When newly printed works arrive from elsewhere, they make quite sure that copies included for fellow booksellers are held up long enough to give them time to supply copies not only to their own clients, but also to competitors' clients who had asked for those books.' Research carried out by H.J. van Leusen into the history of the book trade on the island of Walcheren has shown that publishers shipped books on consignment to booksellers on Walcheren by means of the *stadspakket* system. These packages were delivered to the largest book dealers, who were expected to take responsibility for further distribution among their fellow booksellers. However, as the records reveal, they were often unable to resist the temptation to skim the market before sending such consignments on to smaller tradesmen.⁹⁷

The many newspaper advertisements—however boring and old-fashioned they appear to our jaded eyes, accustomed as we are to colourful and alluring brochures—must also be considered an important weapon in the publishers' attempts to win over the reading public.⁹⁸ On the basis of extensive research into the advertisements placed by booksellers in the *Leidsche Courant* in the period 1720-60, Van Goinga observes an important turning point at the end of the 1750s. The advertisements, most of which were for light reading in Dutch, apparently became longer and more sen-

⁹⁶ Abraham possibly translated a book—'Redenvoeringe door Fontainelle, vertaald door A.B.' (Orations by Fontainelle, translated by A.B.)—published in 1753 by Josua van Vliet, his fellow publisher and business partner in Dordrecht.

⁹⁷ Van Leusen, *Bouwstoffen voor een geschiedenis van de boekhandel van Walcheren*, 113, 136-37.

⁹⁸ This observation, based on the only systematic study of booksellers' advertisements carried out in the Netherlands until now, seems to be far better grounded than the instinctive judgements of some other authors. It is puzzling, for instance, how M. Mathijsen can claim that early nineteenth-century publishers 'did not do much' in the way of advertising: 'Advertisements, for example, had not yet been invented. Catalogues were sent instead.' See M. Mathijsen, *Het literaire leven in de negentiende eeuw* (Leiden 1987) 58. See also Chapter Four.

sational in tone.⁹⁹ H.M. de Blauw points out a similar trend two decades later as regards the introductions to novels. In the course of the 1780s, the information in introductions became briefer and juicier: 'Titles and fore-words began to take on the function nowadays fulfilled by the blurbs of detective stories.'¹⁰⁰

In all of these cases involving the supply of information, the bookshop—whether its clientele was large or small, steady or occasional—was ultimately at the centre of things. Thus the booksellers' assistants who rushed to distribute the latest publications, as well as the large book dealers who abused their position as distributors to poach on their rivals' territory, did not go about this in an arbitrary way, but certainly visited the addresses of their own and others' clients. Just to read the book advertisements in newspapers, which were usually distributed by booksellers, the reader had to cross a threshold: that of a bookshop, a commercial lending library or a coffeehouse. Perhaps we should extend our horizon somewhat, but instead of 'throwing stones through the window' of the local bookshop,¹⁰¹ as Brouwer did, we will stand next to the bookseller and gaze out his shop window, past all the book announcements and title pages, to see what's going on outside.

Street Trading

Sometimes there must have been a huge crowd out there, at least if the eye-witness account of a contemporary historian is anything to go by:

As in the days before the revolution, it was teeming with newsmongers and others with similar papers, whose editors aimed to make their particular political views known to ordinary folk. The cries of people hawking such inexpensive newspapers resounded through the streets of this city.¹⁰²

We are in Amsterdam and it is 12 June 1788, a year after the Orangists seized power. Their Patriot opponents, though banished from the political arena for a while, were evidently still able to riot in the streets. As they had often done in the past, the authorities placed a ban on the hawking of printed matter.¹⁰³ It is only because the booksellers' guilds and local authorities

⁹⁹ Van Goinga, 'Alom te bekomen', 82-83.

¹⁰⁰ H.M. de Blauw, 'Boekjes voor 't gemeen', *Spektator* 4 (1974-75) 93-111, esp. 105.

¹⁰¹ Brouwer, *Lezen en schrijven*, 145.

¹⁰² *Amsterdam in zyne geschiedenissen, voorregten, koophandel ...* XXII (Amsterdam/Harlingen 1800) 21.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

attempted on a number of occasions to forbid street trading in books, newspapers and pamphlets that we have any idea of these peddlers' activities.¹⁰⁴

The Amsterdam booksellers' guild, for example, decided on 27 July 1750 to combat street trading, probably out of fear of unfair competition.¹⁰⁵ To show they meant business, they did not confine themselves to posting placards with the new guild regulations, but ordered the guild's servant to go around and warn stall-holders to stop selling books. Apparently this did not have the desired effect, because in the years that followed, the guild's servant, assisted by 'municipal employees', was sent out time and again to issue warnings to repeat offenders and confiscate their books.¹⁰⁶ In 1752 this happened to five, unnamed peddlers with bookstalls 'on the bridges', whose books were seized by the guild's servant after a number of warnings.¹⁰⁷ The same fate befell the Amsterdam book peddler Barbara Breuk—against whom the Amsterdam bookseller J. Morterre lodged a complaint with the guild—when she tried to set up two new bookstalls in the city.¹⁰⁸ The guild decided that it could turn a blind eye to such a display at one location at the most: as close as possible to her cellar. In 1759 she was caught breaking the rules again.¹⁰⁹ Willem van den Berg, a dealer in second-hand goods, also overstepped his bounds, according to the Amsterdam bookseller Gerrit Bom. After being cautioned he promised to display fewer books in his stall.¹¹⁰

Itinerant traders, hawking their 'almanacs, songs and sometimes a curiosity or a novelty',¹¹¹ trekking from door to door and from one fair to the next, were more difficult to track down. The few traces they left can be found in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century petitions, submitted by booksellers who demanded that action be taken against this form of 'undercutting' by people 'who are too lazy to work, and constantly walk the

¹⁰⁴ With thanks to Ton Jongenelen, who provided me with the information on street traders that cropped up during his research on censure in the second half of the eighteenth century.

¹⁰⁵ GAA, Boekverkopersgilde Amsterdam inv. 52, Notulen gehouden bij de overluyden, microfiche 2, 27 July 1750.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 26 April 1751, 21 June 1752, 27 July 1752, 17 February 1755, 21 April 1755, 18 August 1756, 21 April 1757, 23 May 1757.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 27 June 1752.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 18 August 1756.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 17 December 1759.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 23 May 1757.

¹¹¹ B. van Selm, "Almanacken, lietjes, en somwijl wat wonder, wat nieuw". Volkslectuur in de Noordelijke Nederlanden (1480-1800): een onbekende grootheid', *Leidschrift* 3 (1989) 33-68.

streets, hawking their books, newspapers and new wares'.¹¹² In view of the frequency with which these petitions were submitted, they must have had little effect. Such bans, as Van Eeghen again emphasises, 'certainly remained wishful thinking. There have been complaints about itinerant peddlers for as long as the guilds have existed.'¹¹³ The 1917 article by the Utrecht historian G.A. Evers on the book- and printsellers active at seventeenth- and eighteenth-century fairs also features itinerant peddlers merrily hawking their wares. The assortment they brought to the annual markets was said to be so large that the local tradesmen could not possibly compete with them: 'No local bookseller would have been able to present such a wide variety of sought-after books and prints as were found on display there.'¹¹⁴ Evers obtained his information from the resolution books of the Utrecht town council and from the Chapter of St Mary's. Even though this chapter forbade the peddling of books and prints in the church during the fair, such trade was permitted in the enclosed courtyard beside the chapter buildings.

A much more effective attempt to ban peddlers, at least from the 'historical' streetscape, was undertaken by A. van Alten in her article on the Utrecht book trade around 1800.¹¹⁵ On the basis of a register she discovered, which listed itinerant merchants who had been given official permission to sell their wares in the rural parts of the province of Utrecht, she notes the occurrence in this register of 'surprisingly few' books.¹¹⁶ Because her article contains no statistics, we are left wondering what she means by 'surprisingly few', and on what basis she draws the conclusion that the books they hauled around were mostly 'farces, songbooks, hymnals and the occasional schoolbook', which served as 'fillers'.¹¹⁷ It is however possible that there were even more peddlers without permits, and that the regis-

¹¹² Van Selm, 'Almanacken', 51. P.J. Verkruijsse reports on a series of petitions against 'vagabonds' filed in 1672, 1674, 1678 and 1695. See P.J. Verkruijsse, 'Oktober 1678: Amsterdamse boekverkopers vragen om maatregelen tegen venters van "allerhande vuyle en schandaleuse Boeckjens"' in M.A. Schenkeveld-van der Dussen (ed.), *Nederlandse literatuur een geschiedenis* (Groningen 1993) 388-95, esp. 296. In the eighteenth century, too, there were complaints in The Hague about competition from street vendors (with thanks to J. de Kruif for this information).

¹¹³ Van Eeghen, *De Amsterdamse boekhandel 1680-1725* V, 19-20.

¹¹⁴ G.A. Evers, 'Boek- en prentverkoopers op de Utrechtsche kermis', *Bibliotheekleven* 2 (1917) 311-15, esp. 315.

¹¹⁵ A. van Alten, 'Het Utrechtse boekbedrijf rond 1800. Een aanzet tot reconstructie', *De negentiende eeuw* 14 (1990) 133-46.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 139. Compare the figures given by Brugmans for the mid-nineteenth century. The patent-tax records for 1850 show that 61,000 shopkeepers and 47,000 'peddlers and foreign vendors' were taxed in that year (Brugmans, 'Standen en klassen in Nederland', 114).

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

tered peddlers were selective when it came to declaring the nature of their merchandise, perhaps because the sale of books outside the established book trade met with a great deal of resistance, as is evident from the petitions against peddlers and the measures taken against dealers with permanent bookstalls.¹¹⁸

These itinerant petty tradesmen are, by definition, a difficult group to register and quantify, for contemporaries and later researchers alike. They made their way into the records only when the established booksellers, who belonged to guilds, became so annoyed at these down-at-heel dealers that they submitted a petition to the town council, or when a peddler was caught red-handed selling banned merchandise. An instance of this was recorded in 1788, when Cornelis Simons was caught hawking banned Patriotic pamphlets. Caught with *Welmeenende raad van een getrouwe Nederlander* (The well-meant advice of a loyal Dutchman) in his possession, he admitted to peddling other publications, including the portraits published by Johannes Allart of J.D. van der Capellen tot den Pol.¹¹⁹

Another accidental archival find shows that the established bookseller and the street vendor did not inhabit entirely separate worlds. On 24 October 1758, two female peddlers, Jannetje Janse and Catharina Hamers, declared—after being arrested for the door-to-door selling of a booklet titled *Nieuwstyding of pertinent verhaal wegens een moord die er aan een manspersoon gepleegd zou zijn* (New Tidings, or the definitive story of the murder of a male person)—that they always got their wares from two printers and publishers in the Jordaan district: Rijnders and Barend Koene. The way in which these women were hawking the forbidden murder story suggests two-way traffic, whereby the women were occasionally called upon by the publishers to perform odd jobs. Shortly after *New Tidings* rolled off the press, they were approached by Koene's son, who said he had a job for them. Because they had to pay their own expenses, they could not risk buying stock that might prove unsaleable. They declared to the authorities that they had bought the copies for two stivers apiece, and usually bought

¹¹⁸ Therefore the relatively low numbers of hawkers (33) compared with established booksellers (582) recorded by the French government in the period 1811–12 in its registers of book sales in the Northern Netherlands is not representative either (Brouwer, *Rondom het boek*, 69).

¹¹⁹ GAA, file 5061, inv. 461 (Confessieboek Sept. 1788—Jan. 1789) 24 October 1788. This might refer to a work published by J. Allart and W. Holtrop in 1785: *Voor Capellen tot den Pol*. In collaboration with the Leiden bookseller L. Herdingh, Blussé also published in that year a portrait of (and odes to) Van der Capellen: *Op het afbeeldsel van den Hoogedelen Hooggeboren Heere, Jonkheere Johan Derk van der Capellen, Heere van den Poll*.

new copies only when the first batch was sold out. The Xs with which they signed their statements show that these women catered for less well-off customers.¹²⁰

It is possible that this method of distribution was quite common in the eighteenth century, and not only at the lower end of the market: the world of publishers and printers such as the notorious Amsterdam 'Widow Van Egmont' and her 'tobacco-paper news',¹²¹ and the above-mentioned printers in the Jordaan. The autobiographical *De ongelukkige levensbeschrijving van een Amsterdammer* (The unhappy life of an Amsterdammer), attributed to the journalist Harmanus Koning, describes a fierce conflict within the Amsterdam booksellers' guild about whether it should be permitted to sell new books on the public highway. When some of the guild officers urged the town council to forbid this practice, which had crept into use, others stressed that it was precisely the most prominent booksellers who had stimulated this way of selling by 'coming to them with armfuls of goods to be sold at considerably lower prices than those fixed by the publishers, and that this enabled book dealers to offload piles of books they would never have managed to sell otherwise. And by doing this they avoided all charges of corruption, since guild-brothers had to pay the full price, and if he asked how it was possible that someone had bought a brand-new copy from this or that bookstall for a much lower price, they said they had no idea where those people got their wares.'¹²²

This autobiography, which appeared in 1775, describes the kind of practice of which Johannes Allart (Pieter Blussé's Amsterdam apprentice) was accused in 1800. He was suspected of using a number of irregular channels, including street trading, to distribute his books. By paying his creditors in kind, he was indirectly supplying bookstall-holders, who sold his publications at spectacular discounts. Although Allart attempted, in a statement made in 1808, to shore up his image by expressing shock at the discovery that his best books 'were being sold openly at fairs and bookstalls ... for extremely low prices', his contemporaries knew better.¹²³ They condemned his methods in no uncertain terms, as did Pieter Blussé in his autobio-

¹²⁰ GAA, Notarieel Archief, inv. 13279, doc. no. 402. See also Jongenelen, *Van smaad tot erger*, no. 59.

¹²¹ J.C. Weyerman, *Maandelyksche 't zamenspraaken, tusschen de dooden en de leevenden*, instalment III (September 1726) 5th dialogue, 266.

¹²² *De ongelukkige levensbeschrijving van een Amsterdammer*. M.J. Dekker (ed.) (1st edition Amsterdam 1775; reprinted Amsterdam 1965) 86.

¹²³ T. Broos, 'Books are as good as money but money is better: Johannes Allart (1754-1816)', *Spektator* 9 (1979-80) 14-25, 20-21.

graphical notes, typifying the 'excellent' but unfortunately 'avaricious' publisher Allart as unique in both the good and bad sense.¹²⁴ This contemporary view seems to have been adopted indiscriminately by historians, who maintain that the 'practices of a publisher such as Johannes Allart ... which could have ushered in the commercialisation of the book trade' were 'universally detested' and therefore 'found no following'.¹²⁵

The previous sections have shown, however, that such aggressive marketing strategies made Allart perhaps the most successful—and consequently the most conspicuous—publisher of his time, but they also show that his fellow publishers, and possibly even his predecessors, were every bit as inventive when it came to circumventing guild regulations. Even before Allart appeared on the scene in 1771, trends were emerging that pointed to the modernisation of the book trade: more aggressive newspaper advertisements, the improvement and expansion of distribution networks through selling on consignment, the use of middlemen, the rise of commercial lending libraries, and the emergence of branches within the book trade, with dealers now specialising in new publications, antiquarian books and remainders.

In the preceding overview, Pieter and Abraham Blussé cropped up a number of times as book dealers who actively contributed to, or at least kept abreast of, these new developments. Within the framework of this study they deserve more attention. To what extent are the trends described in the secondary literature applicable to their firm?

The Entrepreneurial Spirit of Abraham and Pieter Blussé

International Trade

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the secondary literature on the book trade in the second half of the eighteenth century suggests that the presumed rise of the book trade in Holland was connected to the decline of international trading in books produced in the Dutch Republic.

¹²⁴ GAD, FA Blussé, inv. 10.

¹²⁵ Kloek and Mijnhardt, 'Negentiende-eeuwse leescultuur', 2-3, 113-19, esp. 117. Cf. Van Eeghen, *De Amsterdamse boekhandel 1680-1725* V, 104 with her somewhat cryptic remark: 'Allart was the only bookseller of his age, who—like Reich in Leipzig—could have changed the Dutch book trade by exerting his power and influence. However, he was an old-fashioned sort of entrepreneur, who ... was more inclined to profit from the opportunities offered by the curious structure of the Dutch book trade.'

Book dealers in Holland concentrated on the production of Dutch-language books in an attempt to expand the domestic market. The Blussé archive contains two files that show how focusing on books in Dutch did not prevent one from trading far beyond the country's borders: indeed, the Dutch colonies proved to be a wide-open market. Since almost nothing is known about this branch of trade, it is worthwhile examining Pieter Blussé's attempts to set up distribution networks in Batavia (present-day Jakarta) and Cape Town.

Pieter's trade with Batavia is documented in a contract he entered into with Pieter Simon Marisse who, in 1802, as a member of the Council of Justice in the service of the Asiatic Council, was preparing to set sail for Batavia.¹²⁶ The contract, which they drew up together, stated that Marisse had received a chest of books from Pieter and promised 'to distribute them, immediately upon arrival in Batavia, in whatever places I judge best'. The books were to be sold within three months, and the copies that remained unsold were to be 'disposed of at public auction or distributed in the best way possible, all with a view to settling accounts properly at the first available opportunity after the public auction and direct selling'. One-quarter of the proceeds were to go to Pieter Simon Marisse, to compensate him 'for transporting the chest' and his 'further efforts'.

The chest must have held a considerable number of books. It was large enough, in any case, to merit the production of a catalogue—of which 275 copies were printed, as revealed by the typesetter's accounts—listing the contents of the shipment.¹²⁷ This catalogue has proved untraceable, however, and because no titles were mentioned in the contract, we have no information about the nature of the reading matter Blussé selected as suitable for the colonies. Nor is it known whether the enterprise was successful. It is to be hoped that it fared better than Blussé's shipment to Cape Town, documented in the other file,¹²⁸ for this attempt to expand the market for Dutch-language books was a complete wash-out, literally and figuratively, and on this occasion we do have the opportunity to inspect the contents of the chest.

In this case the distributor was not a civil servant from the justice department but a man no less trustworthy: the clergyman Jan Christoffel Berrangé

¹²⁶ GAD, FA Blussé n.d., box 45. The contract was dated 28 April 1802.

¹²⁷ This six-page catalogue was compiled on 3 April 1802 and 17 April 1802.

¹²⁸ GAD, FA Blussé n.d., box 52.

of Bloemendaal.¹²⁹ The contract was probably drawn up by Pieter's eldest son, Abraham Blussé Jr, an aspiring clergyman at the Walloon Church, who had a house in Leiden and a country estate near Bloemendaal.¹³⁰ In June 1815, when Berrangé was about to move to South Africa for good, Pieter Blussé wrote to him, asking him to serve as his agent in Cape Town.¹³¹ The terms were different from those accepted by Marisse, who did not become the owner of the books shipped to Batavia but merely acted as the distributor. The risk of disappointing sales was reduced by allowing him to sell at public auction any books that remained unsold after three months. The risk involved with the Cape Town shipment, on the other hand, was borne by the distributor, but this was compensated for by a considerably higher profit margin. Whereas Marisse was to receive 25% of the proceeds from books he had on consignment, Berrangé actually became the owner of the books shipped to Cape Town, buying them from Blussé at a 40% discount. He was expected to pay the full amount—just over 412 guilders—within a year of his departure.

After Berrangé left for the Cape at the end of June 1815, nothing was heard of him for a long time. It was not until 3 October 1817 that he wrote to Blussé. His letter did not contain the promised bill of exchange, but thousands of excuses instead. Since his departure he had had nothing but bad luck. His ship, *De Zeeploeg* (Sea-Plough), had been as leaky as a sieve; he had narrowly escaped drowning, and the books had suffered severe water damage.¹³² This in itself was already detrimental to sales, but the situation became even worse when he discovered, after arriving in Cape Town, that he was to be posted temporarily to Zwelldam, an inland village. However, his situation had improved in the meantime, and he had finally received the promised appointment in Cape Town. The bill of exchange he had sent to Holland, part of which was intended to pay Blussé, had turned out, to his great surprise, to be uncovered: 'Just imagine! I regret to say that it was returned to me the day before yesterday, with a deed of protest, however secure it seemed to be.' Berrangé concludes by imploring Blussé to be patient: 'Could any more misfortunes combine to thwart a

¹²⁹ On Berrangé, see Biog. Dict. Prot. Godgel. I, 438 ff., NNBW.

¹³⁰ The country estate of Cronestein near Zoeterwoude.

¹³¹ This emerges from a letter, dated 15 June 1815, written by Berrangé to Pieter Blussé (GAD, FA Blussé n.d., box 52).

¹³² Cf. P. Moree, *Met vriend die God geleide'. Het Nederlands-Aziatisch postvervoer ten tijde van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (Zutphen 1998) 66-67. He also observed that book parcels were given to passengers or taken by travellers themselves on ships going to the Dutch East Indies, and pointed out that they often arrived wet and 'ruined'.

guiltless person? Judge for yourself! I shall nevertheless try to rectify the mistake as soon as possible to Your Honour's satisfaction.' This communication was followed by another long silence. By November 1818, Pieter Blussé's patience had run out. He approached D.B. Liedermooij of Amsterdam, Berrangé's friend, to whom Blussé had delivered the chest of books destined for Cape Town in 1815, and asked him to act as an intermediary. At first this friend was rather uncooperative:

I do not recall having received a chest of books for Mr Berrangé in June 1815, because so many goods intended for His Honour were sent to my address, which I then sent to the ship with which Mr Berrangé and his family sailed. ... As far as the agreement between Mr Berrangé and Your Honour is concerned, I know even less and am unable to indicate any source from which you could recover your money.¹³³

Liedermooij was inclined, however, to comply with Pieter's request to enclose a letter from Pieter in one of his own letters to Berrangé: 'We will write a letter to him shortly, and will gladly enclose a brief note, should you choose to send one.'¹³⁴

This strategy did not work either. The archive contains copies of a series of letters written by Pieter to Berrangé—and enclosed with Liedermooij's letters—which were systematically ignored by the addressee, despite Pieter's increasingly unpleasant tone. In a letter of 15 April 1821, Blussé even threatened to instigate legal proceedings:

Sadly, this forces me to discuss the matter with you again, and to ask seriously whether such behaviour can be reconciled with your duties and standing, and whether you have only yourself to blame if, to rectify such an injustice, we now set discretion aside and expose you by every possible method to the public disgrace merited by such behaviour, which we shall not delay in doing if we do not receive satisfaction from you within six months of writing this letter.

Six months later Pieter requested Liedermooij's opinion:

Having recently been in Amsterdam, while speaking to Mr Liedermooij we complained to him, and he agreed with us, and found it most inexplicable, since your present, more fortunate circumstances have put you in the position, as His Honour knew, to pay off other debts.¹³⁵

¹³³ This letter dates from 19 November 1818.

¹³⁴ The underlining is Liedermooij's.

¹³⁵ This letter dates from 21 October 1821.

Three years and dozens of letters later—Pieter Blussé had meanwhile died—the debt had still not been paid, but the friendship between Liedermooij and Berrangé had deteriorated to such an extent that Liedermooij had to rely on the correspondence between his daughter and a daughter of Berrangé for information about the circumstances in Cape Town. These letters were now quoted without reservation to keep Blussé abreast of the situation.

As promised, I said I would inform you about Berrangé. We have just received a letter from one of his daughters, so I shall keep my promise and tell you at once what the young lady says about the matter, to wit, the following: 'Father is just about to set out ... and sends you his warm regards. He cannot be persuaded to write, but asks me to answer you, saying that some time ago he wrote to Mr L'Ange of Amsterdam concerning Mr Blussé & Son, and would you please be so kind as to put these gentlemen in touch with him.'¹³⁶

Around Christmas 1823, eight years after the delivery of the chest of books, there was at last a breakthrough. Berrangé sent Liedermooij a letter, explaining in detail how much he had been deceived by his transaction with Blussé. Most of the books that had been damaged by water had proved unsaleable:

He cannot help that, of course. All he could do was demand payment, but Your Honour should know and take into consideration how bitter a pill this was for me, and that I could in no way sleep peacefully or profit from this business.¹³⁷

These circumstances had not prompted him to pay Blussé's bill, but 'the man's muddled letters' had only increased his irritation and persuaded him 'to await his threats of public prosecution'. Eventually changing his mind, he had sent authorisation of payment to Blussé, which Blussé had either never received or never taken the trouble to cash:

And you see, that is now actually the case, caused by such procrastination, that the person I authorised has now closed his account with me, and now has nothing more at hand, unless it be his school salary in arrears, which from the very beginning I had earmarked for the payment of that office, but in which I have likewise been frustrated by the government, just as Blussé has consequently been frustrated by me.

¹³⁶ The letter from Liedermooij, presumably to Abraham Blussé, dates from 15 February 1824.

¹³⁷ From an excerpt copied by Liedermooij from a letter written by Berrangé on 23 December 1823.

Offering excuse after excuse, Berrangé began to contradict himself. After stressing that payment had become well-nigh impossible, now that he no longer had an account in Holland, he ended his epistle to Liedermooij by requesting that he send Blussé's bill to him, so that he could 'put an end to the matter'. He would settle the amount with a bill of exchange, 'and what more could he possibly want?' Unfortunately this letter was delayed, because Liedermooij had had 'the bad luck to mislay it among other papers',¹³⁸ but it eventually led to all unsettled bills being paid in June 1824 by the Reverend Josue Teissedre l'Ange, to whom Berrangé had given power of attorney, though he calculated 'a 50% discount instead of 40%, in view of the general reports of the adverse outcome of this enterprise'.

Such discounts are only profitable, of course, if they apply to books on the publisher's list. From the receipt that specifies which books Berrangé took with him, this did seem to be the case. The only description that can be given of this selection is that it represented a cross-section of the more affordable books on Blussé's list in around 1815. Naturally Berrangé took Spangenberg's *Arbeid onder de heidenen* (Working among the heathens),¹³⁹ collections of sermons by E. Kist, J.H. Regenbogen and J.H. van den Doorslag, and four family Bibles by Scheidius and Stronck, as well as Beets's stories for children,¹⁴⁰ Glatz's *Familietafereelen* (Family scenes),¹⁴¹ Antoine's *Beroemde dieren* (Famous animals),¹⁴² De Goede's *Gedenkwaardige mensen* (Memorable people)¹⁴³ and Van Kampen's *Gedenkwaardige vrouwen* (Memorable women).¹⁴⁴ For those who had not seen enough of the world, Berrangé took along Chateaubriand's *Reize van Parijs naar Jerusalem* (Journey from Paris to Jerusalem),¹⁴⁵ and for those wishing to stay closer to home he had Lichtenstein's *Reizen in het zuidelyk gedeelte van Africa* (Journeys in the southern part of Africa).¹⁴⁶ The chest also contained De Gelder's *Eeuwigdurende almanak* (Everlasting almanac),¹⁴⁷ Holtrop's English-Dutch and Dutch-English dictionary, and the same author's text-

¹³⁸ Liedermooij sent the letter on 3 June 1824.

¹³⁹ A.G. Spangenberg, *Arbeid der evangelische broederen onder de heidenen* (Dordrecht 1790).

¹⁴⁰ P. Beets, *Korte verhalen voor kinderen* (2 vols; Dordrecht 1800).

¹⁴¹ J. Glatz, *Familie-tafereelen en verhalen voor de jeugd* (Dordrecht 1813).

¹⁴² A. Antoine, *De beroemde dieren* (Dordrecht 1812).

¹⁴³ W. Goede, *Galerij van merkwaardige mensen* (Dordrecht 1813).

¹⁴⁴ N.G. van Kampen, *Galerij van vermaarde vrouwen* (2 vols; Dordrecht 1814).

¹⁴⁵ F.A. de Chateaubriand, *Reise van Parijs naar Jerusalem* (2 vols; Dordrecht 1811-12).

¹⁴⁶ H. Lichtenstein, *Reizen in het zuidelyk gedeelte van Africa* (4 vols; Dordrecht 1813-15).

¹⁴⁷ J. de Gelder, *Eeuwigdurende almanak* (Dordrecht 1814).

book for learning the English language¹⁴⁸—all books that might be of use to Dutch people abroad. These publications varied in price from 4 stivers to 12 guilders. The more expensive of Blussé's publications had been reserved for Berrangé's personal use, as evidenced by the separate receipt. This list boasted, in addition to several of the above-mentioned works, the complete oeuvre of Buffon for the sum of 180 guilders,¹⁴⁹ Blussé's twenty-four-volume *Volledige beschrijving van kunsten en ambachten* (Complete description of the arts and trades) for 69 guilders,¹⁵⁰ and a pocket atlas worth 36 guilders. Apparently Berrangé had not been able to resist taking advantage of Blussé's 40% discount to enrich his own bookcase in far-off Africa with a number of splendid editions, however damaged by water they turned out to be.

The fact that Blussé did not select only a few specific titles for the colonies—apart from leaving his more expensive series at home—could be an indication of his unfamiliarity with this market. He tried to include a bit of everything. On the other hand, it reflects the nature of his list: the customer who racked his brains about which books to take with him to a desert island—or to a village like Zwellendam—could simply take a sampling from Blussé's list, which was wide-ranging but selective, and it would provide him with reading matter that was both edifying and entertaining. This characteristic of Blussé's list will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

Unfortunately, the family archive tells us little about any other international contacts the firm of A. Blussé & Son might have had. The accounts kept by Pieter's eldest son, Abraham, reveal that the firm did business with the London booksellers Ogle & Co. A single, partly illegible bill from Vienna has been preserved, and there are indications that Blussé maintained close ties with firms in the Southern Netherlands.¹⁵¹ This probably says more about the nature of the archive, from which most of the firm's papers are missing, than it does about the extent of Blussé's international trading activities. The Berrangé file survived more or less by accident. It was found among the papers in Pieter's estate, because the affair had to be wound up by the executor of his will. If Berrangé had paid more promptly, and the

¹⁴⁸ For more on this subject, see Chapters Three and Six.

¹⁴⁹ For more on this subject, see Chapter Six.

¹⁵⁰ For more on this subject, see Chapter Four.

¹⁵¹ This subject will be reconsidered in Chapter Six. The bill from Vienna, dated 1794, is preserved in GAD, FA Blussé n.d., box 49.

matter had been settled before Pieter's death, we would probably never have known about it.

This unsuccessful enterprise is illustrative of the restrictions eighteenth-century booksellers faced when trying to do business abroad. The greatest obstacles were not calamities such as leaky ships, mislaid letters and uncovered bills of exchange, but the constraints imposed by the eighteenth-century economy of trust. Despite Blussé's precautionary measures—his selection of creditworthy distributors, for example—the system was anything but watertight. The only way Blussé could bring any pressure to bear on a defaulting creditor thousands of miles away was to suggest that non-payment would damage the defaulter's reputation or friendships in his native country. These tactics eventually worked for Blussé, but it was many years before he received the money that was owed to him. Pieter's activities as an auctioneer were presumably more lucrative.

Auctions

We know from the accusations made against him by an irate bookseller that during his apprenticeship in Amsterdam Pieter broadened his activities to include organising auctions, but we also know from his own correspondence that soon after returning to Dordrecht he embarked upon this lucrative business. His love letters to Sophia contain frequent remarks about the tremendous pressure he was under because of a book auction he was organizing. His autobiography also bears witness to important achievements (at least in his eyes), which marked the beginning of his career in Dordrecht and were 'very beneficial' to both his livelihood and his good name. One of these was 'the public auction of an outstanding library belonging to the late tax collector De Back (which I merely recorded and classified).'¹⁵² Years later, in 1822, when Pieter put pen to paper to write his autobiographical notes, his memory appears to have served him well. The archives of the Dordrecht Pawn Bank contain an incomplete register of auctions held in Dordrecht from 1759 onwards that also mentions their proceeds, including the earnings from the sale of 'the books belonging to the late Mr de Bak'.¹⁵³ The auction, held on 8 April 1771, raised 6,056 gul-

¹⁵² GAD, FA Blussé, inv. 11.

¹⁵³ GAD, Archief van de Bank van lening, inv. 309. This concerns the property of the tax collector Mr Jan de Bak.

ders—the highest profit of all the auctions recorded in this register.¹⁵⁴ Most of the private libraries sold at auction in Dordrecht yielded between 500 and 1,000 guilders. Even the stock of bound books belonging to the Dordrecht publisher and bookseller J.G. Wittich yielded only 2,148 guilders when it was sold at auction in 1781.¹⁵⁵ And if we compare the proceeds from the sale of Bak's library to the average earnings from the public auctions of books that took place in Leiden in 1771, it is clear that Pieter had every reason to recall proudly the sale of Bak's library years after it took place. Leiden was much more important than Dordrecht as an auction venue, and yet the average proceeds there were two-thirds lower than Blussé's topper of 2,000.¹⁵⁶ The erratic registration of Dordrecht auctions—the names of the booksellers running them are not always mentioned—makes it impossible to calculate the number of auctions organised by A. Blussé & Son as a percentage of those organised by Dordrecht booksellers as a whole.¹⁵⁷ Nor is it possible to determine Blussé's average yearly income from his activities as an auctioneer. From one of the three surviving balance sheets we gain the impression that his profits were substantial. The balance sheet for the year 1774 records an unpaid bill of 2,206 guilders for two auctions he organised in 1773.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, the above-mentioned records of the Pawn Bank also show that throughout the period 1756-1800 he continued to organise auctions of both unbound books (from bookseller to bookseller) and bound books (public sales of books from and to private individuals). This is confirmed by the advertisements Blussé placed in several newspapers, in which he regularly announced auctions of bound and unbound books.¹⁵⁹ The atmosphere in which this took place is revealed by an unexpected source: an anonymous pamphlet of 1784 that denounces Pieter Blussé's obsequious manner towards Cornelis de Gijselaar, the

¹⁵⁴ GAD, Archief van de Bank van lening, inventory numbers examined: 286 to 328 (1756-92).

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., inv. 319, 26 March 1781.

¹⁵⁶ This calculation is based on figures compiled by Van Goinga, *Alom te bekomen*, 204.

¹⁵⁷ The most complete register of names of booksellers auctioning their wares is that of 1788. The auction held that year by H. de Koning and Nicolaes van Eijdsen raised 716 guilders; the auction organised by A. Blussé and Son raised 1,354 guilders; the auction organised by Pieter van Braam raised 3,484 guilders; the proceeds of Hendrik de Haas's auction were 2,449 guilders; J. Krap's auction raised 1,016 guilders (GAD, Archief van de Bank van lening, inv. 326).

¹⁵⁸ GAD, FA Blussé n.d., box 1.

¹⁵⁹ RC 28 June 1781, 5 July 1781, 2 September 1783, 8 April 1784, 25 June 1785, 22 July 1788, DC 16 August 1796 (these newspapers have not been studied systematically for advertisements).

Patriotic pensionary of Dordrecht. The political implications of this pamphlet will be examined in detail in the following chapter; for the time being it is interesting to take a closer look at the scene of action:

Blussé, you should know, recently held a sale of books among booksellers; it is customary for the seller to treat the buyers to a meal, as indeed happened here.¹⁶⁰

This custom of closing private auctions with a festive meal is not mentioned in either Van Eeghen's standard reference work or the recently published, new standard work by Van Goinga, of which the chapter on book auctions is a crucial part. It will come as no surprise to anyone with even a slight knowledge of the eighteenth century that a prayer was said before these meals. We have every reason, however, while joining in this prayer, to peek at the man whom Pieter—the organiser of the auction and therefore the person presiding over the gathering—felt compelled to address:

Blussé is shown here in an attitude of prayer: just look at him praying! Just see how he looks in the wrong direction! He's looking at Hell instead of Heaven! Just listen to him speaking so ingratiatingly in front of G¹⁶¹

Cornelis de Gijsselaar, to whom G refers, was not one of Pieter's fellow booksellers: he was the pensionary of Dordrecht, and in this capacity he exerted a great deal of influence on numerous municipal ordinances, including those governing the book trade. Apparently it was not unusual for high-ranking officials to join in the meal that followed an auction of unbound books.

Advertisements and Distribution

As mentioned in Chapter One, in 1771 Blussé was one of the five booksellers to advertise most frequently in the *Leidsche Courant*. Van Goinga observes not only an increase in the number of book advertisements, but also a change in their tone. This development is also evident in the newspaper advertisements Blussé placed in both national and regional newspapers. They are engaging in tone and much less concise than those written by the generations of publishers before him.¹⁶² The attention of the readers already won over by earlier publications was subsequently attracted, by

¹⁶⁰ *Nieuwe Hollandsche hand-vertooningen gevolgt na de vinding van den beruchten Italiaan Cornelio Giselarario Servietto* (n.p., 1784).

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² This will be examined in greater detail in Chapter Four.

means of extensive lists and assortment catalogues bound into the back of his editions, to yet other titles with which to enrich their bookcases. A number of his sidelines, such as selling lottery tickets and running the post office, no doubt made his bookshop seem more accessible. Moreover, he did not hesitate—as evidenced by his distribution of free issues of a women's magazine—to take to the streets in an attempt to interest readers in new publications.

His advertisements also reveal that he made use of the depot-holders who had become necessary for publishers who did a lot of selling on consignment. An advertisement of 1755 mentions his agents in Amsterdam, the firm of D. Onder de Linden and F. Houttuyn, and in 1768 G. de Groot & Son. It stands to reason that the Amsterdam bookseller Loveringh was part of his distribution network when young Pieter was in charge there. An advertisement of 1767 tells us that the shipment of Valmont de Bomare's *Woordenboek der natuurlijke historie* (Dictionary of natural history) had been delayed by the rivers freezing, but that Loveringh's in Amsterdam still had a number of copies in stock.¹⁶³ In the vicinity of the much more distant city of Middelburg, his fellow booksellers could make use, at least in the 1750s, of the services of Louis Taillefert.¹⁶⁴

Shop Library and Antiquarian Bookshop

Unfortunately, Abraham's commercial lending library, which opened as early as 1762, remains virtually invisible. The only source found is an announcement that appeared in the *'s Gravenhaagsche Courant* of 28 June 1762, warmly recommending the recently published catalogue of his public lending library. His books could be borrowed 'for very low prices' per volume, or one could pay an annual subscription of 16 guilders. This fee was remarkably high compared with those of other libraries in this period, which suggests he was trying to attract the more affluent readers.¹⁶⁵ Only

¹⁶³ LC 1767, no. 156 (with thanks to Hannie van Goinga, who allowed me to peruse these and several other advertisements placed by Blussé before 1771).

¹⁶⁴ AC 8 May 1755. See also Chapter One. That Pieter's trade was not restricted to the Northern Netherlands can be deduced from his autobiographical notes, in which he mentions visiting 'Brabant, Flanders and Zeeland' on a six-week business trip undertaken for his father in 1769. Unfortunately, our curiosity as to the 'new fruits' collected there 'for trade and ... [his] mind', of which 'only a few fragments remain', cannot be satisfied. Owing to 'a succession of activities', Pieter is unable to make a neat copy of these 'notes written partly in pencil', which had meanwhile become so illegible as to be worthless.

¹⁶⁵ A subscription to Hendrik Bakhuyzen's lending library in The Hague cost 10 guilders and 25 stivers in 1777. His fellow townsman Hendrik Scheurleer charged an annual subscrip-

the more detailed announcement of Abraham's library was free to the public. Those interested could do as the advertisement suggested and apply to Blussé. Lacking this prospectus, the historian must make do with the short text of the advertisement, which shows that twelve years after the founding of the Netherlands' first commercial lending library, Abraham was, if not a trendsetter, at least one of the first followers of this trend. At the same time, the fact that he advertised in a Hague newspaper shows that he had a larger library clientele in mind than merely the inhabitants of Dordrecht.¹⁶⁶ It is not known whether this enterprise was a success or a failure, but there was no mention of it in 1771, when Abraham handed his business over to his son Pieter.¹⁶⁷

Abraham perhaps founded this library with the idea of involving his youngest son Adolph in the running of it, thus making him familiar with the book trade. If this was the case, Abraham's attempt to branch out presumably died a premature death along with Adolph in 1767, just as his plans to establish—through his eldest son, Pieter—an Amsterdam branch were thwarted by the death of his intended successor in Dordrecht. The way in which Pieter spent his free time shows that Abraham often took advantage of opportunities to combine education and business.

After school and during holidays, Pieter was not only initiated into the noble art of bookbinding and the copying of letters and bills, but also became better acquainted with the book trade by acting as a buyer for his father at auctions of bound books and by compiling detailed catalogues—complete with prices—of antiquarian books. At a very young age Pieter was already a 'book runner': someone who scoured auctions, libraries and bookshops in search of bargains and rare treasures, which he then sold to book lovers for a profit. If we examine the qualifications book runners had to have, as listed by Van Goinga, this activity seems to have been highly suitable—but perhaps too demanding—for a fourteen-year-old boy training to be a publisher and bookseller: "To be successful as a "book runner" one had to possess thorough bibliographic knowledge, be familiar with the

tion fee of 11 guilders in 1750. Books could be borrowed from an Amsterdam lending library belonging to Willem Eleveld (1761-67) for an annual fee of 6 guilders (Van Goinga, *Alom te bekomen*, 237, 243, 246).

¹⁶⁶ In this period the *Dordrechtsche Courant* did not exist; from now on it will be referred to as *DC*. For local advertisements the *Rotterdamsche Courant*, hereafter abbreviated to *RC*, was the most important channel. For more on this subject, see Chapter Four.

¹⁶⁷ GAD, FA Blussé n.d., box 61.

market, and, above all, have good contacts. Persuasiveness, tact and good manners were indispensable.¹⁶⁸

The first catalogue Pieter compiled is no longer extant. He must have written it in the first half of the 1760s, even before becoming apprenticed at the age of sixteen to the Amsterdam bookseller Loveringh. His autobiographical notes express a certain amount of pride in these early activities: 'Having conceived the plan to compile at least one collection of books in our mother tongue, in which one could find the most important and rare books on every subject, I succeeded so well, by diligently observing (mostly on commission) all the auctions within my reach, that I did not hesitate to publish price lists of these volumes.'

This last phrase, which suggests that courage is needed to publish antiquarian catalogues with price lists, seems a bit strange at first glance, because the publisher's lists and catalogues compiled by Abraham and Pieter at this time invariably quoted prices. Pieter was probably referring to the problems experienced by the Amsterdam bookseller Hermanus de Wit in 1760, when he published his antiquarian *Prys-catalogi*. The sale it announced was prohibited by the Amsterdam booksellers' guild on the grounds that De Wit was trying to circumvent the ban on booksellers' auctioning their own stock. Because De Wit's advertisements attempted, in imitation of the 'fixed-price sales' that were so successful in England, to increase the tension among aspiring bidders, he published a beginning and an end date, to mark the period in which his offer was available. For this reason the guild viewed his marketing method as a public auction subject to the usual regulations. De Wit did not make the same mistake twice. His 'price lists' were rebaptised 'name lists', which no longer mentioned the period during which the books were for sale, and the guild turned a blind eye to what were mainly cosmetic changes.¹⁶⁹ This affair seems to have taught Pieter and his father a lesson too, for no dates are given in their advertisement for the *Alphabetische Catalogus* published in the 1760s.¹⁷⁰ In the foreword to the *Alphabetische Naamlijst* published in the 1770s, Pieter

¹⁶⁸ H. van Goinga, 'Pieter van Damme (1727-1770): Nederlands eerste antiquaar? Een verkenning naar het antiquariaat in de Republiek in de tweede helft van de achttiende eeuw' in T. Croiset van Uchelen and Hannie van Goinga (eds.), *Van pen tot laser. 31 opstellen over boek en schrift aangeboden aan Ernst Braches* (Amsterdam 1996) 121-42, 121-24.

¹⁶⁹ Van Goinga, *Alom te bekomen*, 223.

¹⁷⁰ LC 1766, no. 84, 14 July. The catalogue contained an announcement of a second edition. The second part of this catalogue was announced in 1767 (LC 1767, no. 92).

also played it safe by mentioning only the limited amount of time buyers had to return incomplete books.¹⁷¹

If we take a look at the size of this *Naamlijst* and assume that Pieter's earlier catalogue could compete with it, he was certainly justified at the end of his life to look back with pride at this achievement, owing both to its innovative appearance and the breadth of its content. This 146-page book contained some 6,000 titles which, together with the supplement published in 1781, can compete with Arrenberg and Abcoude's standard reference work. Just as he had done when he founded his commercial lending library, Blussé, in setting up a department for second-hand books, was one of the first to follow a new trend that emerged in the early 1760s: the active acquisition of rare second-hand books intended for a growing market of bibliophiles and collectors. Pieter's *Naamlijst*, however, was directed more at a wide public than at a select company of book-loving connoisseurs: 'Indeed, we flatter ourselves that lovers and practitioners of all the arts and sciences will find a stock of books here that contains books they have not yet acquired or have sought elsewhere in vain.'

The collection was extremely wide-ranging and contained many recently published works, but there were relatively few volumes that were more than 150 years old. Even though incunables and old manuscripts were already highly sought after in those days,¹⁷² his catalogue contains only one such specimen: the *Sermoonen van den H. Bernadus* (Sermons of St Bernard), published by Pieter van Os in Breda in 1495.¹⁷³ If Blussé can be said to have had a speciality, it was mainly Dutch-language publications, as emphasised in Pieter's autobiographical notes. In this catalogue the works in other languages, which are scarce in any case, are mostly Latin or French titles printed in italics, apparently as a visual aid. Pieter's remark about the varied content of this collection is certainly not an exaggeration either, for these books are extremely diverse in nature, comprising titles ancient and modern in Dutch and French and Latin by such authors as Voetius, Coccejus, Descartes, Voltaire, Hugo Grotius, Franciscus Lievens

¹⁷¹ *Alphabetische naamlijst van boeken, in onderscheidene taalen en wetenschappen, meest allen fraai ingebonden en geconditioneerd ...* (Dordrecht 1779).

¹⁷² P.J. Buijnsters, 'J.J. Björnsthål's bezoek aan Nederlandse boekverzamelaars in 1774/1775', *Documentatieblad werkgroep 18e eeuw* (April 1977) nos. 34/35, 65-92. On the development of bibliophile interest in this period, see also *ibid.*, 'Literatuur en bibliotheek', *De Gids* 152 (1989) 877-85; P. Altena, 'Van boekenhaat en "bibliomania". De verbeelding van de bibliotheek in de Nederlandse literatuur van de achttiende eeuw', *Parmentier* 3 (1991-92) nos. 3/4, 29-35.

¹⁷³ *Alphabetische naamlijst* 4.

Kersteman, Simon de Vries, Mattheus Smallegange and Jan Wagenaar, as well as the literary luminaries of the Dutch Golden Age—Vondel, Hooft and Cats—and popular anonymous works such as *De soldaat van fortuin* (The soldier of fortune), *De tempel van Venus* (The temple of Venus) and *Den olyken boer* (The roguish peasant). One could over-indulge in special books at substantial prices—which Pieter, however, referred to as ‘modest’—such as T.C. Lilienthal’s sixteen-volume *Oordeelkundige bybelverklaring* (Judicious exegesis) of 1766, in a limited edition of twelve copies, each of which was priced at 58 guilders.¹⁷⁴ One could also pay 15 guilders and 15 stivers for a missal stolen from Haarlem’s Grote Kerk during the Iconoclastic Fury of 1566,¹⁷⁵ or spend 31 guilders and 10 stivers on the eleven-volume *Zaken van staat en oorlog* (Affairs of state and war) by Aitzema and Sylvius, which had ‘only a little worm damage’.¹⁷⁶ But one could also treat oneself to very inexpensive books—in Pieter’s jargon, ‘books set very low [in price]’—such as Klaarbouts’s *De klucht van het kalf* (The farce of the calf) of 1662, which cost a mere 4 stivers,¹⁷⁷ or, for the same price, *Het mislukte huwelyk* (The failed marriage) by an anonymous author.¹⁷⁸

It is not inconceivable that at least some of the books from Abraham’s lending library found a new, temporary place in this catalogue, as had many of Blussé’s own publications, this time in bound editions, which gave him another chance to sell them. It seems as though Pieter cleverly exploited this new branch of trade, in order ‘to kill more birds with one stone’, as he would have put it.¹⁷⁹ The publication of this catalogue gave his bookshop greater prestige and allowed him to draw attention to his business, including earlier publications and publishers’ remainders. In this branch of the trade, customers were required to pay in cash, so it was also a source of liquid assets. Finally, his wide-ranging assortment could attract customers, tempting both collectors and bargain-hunters to visit his bookshop and take a look at the more recently published, unbound books as well. Like most of his fellow booksellers who were active in this branch of the business, Blussé’s section of second-hand books continued to function as part of his existing printing and publishing firm. Pieter van Damme, who spe-

¹⁷⁴ *Alphabetische naamlijst* 30. This refers to a work published in Amsterdam while Pieter was living there.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 144.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ In a letter to his son Adolph dated 18 December 1792 (GAD, FA Blussé, inv. 22).

cialized in old and rare books, was an exception in those days. He was a forerunner of the type of antiquarian bookseller who appeared later in the eighteenth century.

Despite his promises, Pieter's evident inability to publish new supplements after 1781 is very understandable, considering his other activities. Compiling such a catalogue—let alone acquiring the collection it described—must have been extremely time-consuming. In his autobiographical notes, Pieter himself remarks that the growth of his firm prevented him from 'devoting to this labour-intensive department all the energy and attention it demanded', whereupon he concentrates on his other achievements as a bookseller and publisher: 'Indeed, in the scheme described above, I longed to give my branch of livelihood every possible boost and also, in my own measure, to contribute to the blossoming of my native city.'

Publisher's List

The increasing importance of Pieter's bookshop—as emerges from his growing trade with the firm of Luchtmans, as well as his fifth-place ranking on the list of booksellers most frequently mentioned in stock lists—was discussed in Chapter One. The relative extent of his production as a publisher can be determined only when the lists of other publishers of the same period have been assessed or quantitative research has been carried out into all the books produced in this period.¹⁸⁰ In any case, the development of his list shows rapid growth (this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six). Having produced 140 books in the period 1745-70, the firm's production increased from 232 in 1771-97 to 561 in 1798-1830. When these figures are split into volumes—as opposed to complete (multi-volume) publications—production rose from 208 in the first period to 409 in the second, and ultimately to 780 in the last period, although this last period is far removed from the period under discussion here. Moreover, it is possible that some of this apparent growth is connected with the available sources, which also increased in the later period.¹⁸¹ The composition of Blussé's list in the second half of the eighteenth century—a subject to which we will pay close attention in Chapter Six—reflects the previously mentioned preferences displayed by the customers of Tijl and Van Benthem. The emphasis in Blussé's list was on the genres that also proved most lucra-

¹⁸⁰ José de Kruif is examining this in the context of a post-doctoral study at the University of Utrecht.

¹⁸¹ On this subject, see Chapter Six.

tive for those booksellers. In the period 1745-70, 42% of Blussé's collection consisted of theology, compared with 24% in 1771-1803. History and geography were in second place, at 16% in both periods. As was the case in Tijl's and Van Benthem's bookshops, novels—at 2-3% in both periods—represented only a small percentage of the list. The remaining publications were distributed more or less equally over the various categories, apart from children's literature, which shows a slight peak. Both Abraham and Pieter Blussé seem to have opted for a cautious publishing strategy, focusing on both current religious works that could be produced inexpensively and historical and geographical writings. The pious works, for which there was fairly steady demand, guaranteed a regular income, whereas riskier investments in 'general books'—which displayed far more erratic sales, at least in Tijl's case—could be much more profitable if they proved to be a success.

The extensive research files based on Tijl's and Van Benthem's customer records make it possible to form an idea of Blussé's competitive position with regard to other publishers in the second half of the eighteenth century.¹⁸² The Zwolle bookseller Tijl obtained his stock from at least 151 different publishers in the years 1777-87. Among the top ten publishers, Blussé's name appears in eighth place, with sales from his list amounting to 201 guilders. There are only gradual differences between Blussé and the other booksellers in the 'top ten' of Tijl's suppliers. For instance, the Utrecht publisher A. van Paddenburg appears in second place with sales of 683 guilders; in fourth place appears the Amsterdam publisher Martinus de Bruyn with sales of 444 guilders; in sixth place is another Amsterdam publisher, J. Schalekamp, with sales of 282 guilders. One publisher, however, stands head and shoulders above the rest: the Amsterdam publisher Johannes Allart, who in this period sold books to Tijl for a total of 1,393 guilders. More than twenty years later, the customer records of the Middelburg bookseller Van Benthem show that a significant change had taken place: in 1808 Van Benthem sold books published by at least 291 different Dutch publishers, and eight of the 'top ten' publishers on his list of suppliers are completely new. This is hardly surprising, since a new generation had meanwhile taken over. In third place is Adriaan Loosjes with sales of 736 guilders; in fourth place we find C.H. Bohn with sales of 670

¹⁸² It should also be noted that in the case of many of the books traded by Van Benthem and Tijl, the publisher is not known. The number of publishers must therefore have been much higher. The same holds true for the number of transactions, which might have caused distortion in the 'top ten' list.

guilders; seventh place is occupied by another newcomer, Evert Maaskamp, with sales of 456 guilders. Nevertheless, the firm of Blussé, which is still among the largest publishing companies, is in fifth place with sales of 549 guilders. Heading the list, just as he did twenty-one years previously, is the publisher Johannes Allart, who far outstrips the others with sales of 2,340 guilders.¹⁸³

A Stagnating Market or a Growing Reading Public?

Evidently Pieter Blussé—following in his father's footsteps—lacked neither drive nor commitment at the beginning of his career as an independent bookseller and publisher. The poems composed around 1772 by friends and relations suggest that the firm's brilliance was even reflected in its place of business, Dordrecht: 'Your city's patroness, who has long taken satisfaction in this gentleman's press, and derived honour and prosperity from his trade.' Such portrayals are perhaps exaggerated, but Abraham's success was certainly not limited to home victories. We saw how he succeeded in expanding his father's bookbinding business into a bookshop and publishing house of national consequence. His father had paved the way for him, giving Pieter a strong basis on which to build. Moreover, the thorough grounding Pieter was given in the book trade—by working after school and in the holidays in his father's bookshop and later as the manager of Loveringh's in Amsterdam—promised great things for the future. No less favourable is the flexibility shown by Blussé's firm when new developments became apparent, such as the use of depot-holders for distribution, the establishment of commercial lending libraries, and the introduction of the specialist antiquarian book trade.

Was the economic tide flowing in Pieter's favour when he took over the business from his father in the early 1770s? Nowadays opinions differ. Can modernisation of the book trade take place only when profits exceed expenditure, when either increasing numbers of readers or increased demand by existing readers causes the market for books to grow? De Vries and Van der Woude, who counted the number of book-printers active in the Dutch Republic, observed a sharp decline in this branch between 1670

¹⁸³ With thanks to Gerard Schulte Nordholt, who has processed and digitized the lion's share of the Van Benthem file, and who kindly provided me with a print-out of all the publishers in the Tijl and Van Benthem files in order of importance. With thanks to Han Brouwer, Joost Kloek and Wijnand Mijnhardt, who generously allowed me to study their files.

and 1729, after which—apart from a slight drop during the 1750s and 1760s—it again expanded to reach a peak in the years 1770–89 that outstripped the seventeenth-century heyday by 6%.¹⁸⁴ Van Leusen's findings, based on the so-called *confrater* books—which record exchanges made between fellow book dealers—of the Leiden book wholesaler Luchtmans, corroborate these findings in part: 'the period 1763–85 was particularly flourishing'.¹⁸⁵ Van Goinga endorses these conclusions from a completely different perspective: the growing volume of trade at public book auctions held in Leiden.¹⁸⁶

The 'business' of history has its own fluctuations, of course. De Kruif even speaks of the stagnation of the book trade in the second half of the eighteenth century.¹⁸⁷ She does not consider the above-mentioned tendencies towards modernisation of the book trade—whether improvements in the distribution network or changes in advertising policy—to be signs of a flourishing market but rather phenomena that accompany a stagnating market.¹⁸⁸ The eighteenth-century market for books had, in her view, become saturated, which prompted booksellers to improve their product and open up new markets.¹⁸⁹ In order to explain this phenomenon she introduced a modern marketing theory: the life cycle of products. This life cycle, which begins with the successful launch of a new product, consists of various phases: an introductory phase, in which sales of the new product are slow, because both producer and public are still getting used to the product; an expansion stage, in which sales increase rapidly and increasing competition between producers leads to further improvements of the product; and finally the phase of maturity, which slowly changes into a phase of stagnation or saturation, in which changes in sales are caused only by changes in the market itself (such as population growth or new markets having opened up). During the last phase, many earlier customers supposedly confine themselves to buying replacements of the product in ques-

¹⁸⁴ J. de Vries and A. van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy*, 314–318.

¹⁸⁵ Van Leusen, *Bouwstoffen*, 58. The fact that the firm Luchtmans swiftly deteriorated after 1785, whereas De Vries and Van der Woude continued to flourish for another four years, probably has more to do with Luchtmans's metamorphosis—from a wholesaler in new books to an antiquarian dealer with a much smaller clientele—than with any general developments in the book trade.

¹⁸⁶ Van Goinga, *Alom te bekomen*, 204.

¹⁸⁷ De Kruif, *Liefhebbers en gewoontelezers*, 129.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 144.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 129–44.

tion.¹⁹⁰ To show that this economic pattern is applicable not only to automobiles and gramophone records but also to books, she goes back as far as the singing journeymen in the Epilogue of this book. This exercise takes her back to the first half of the fifteenth century, when the German printer Gutenberg—for the singing journeymen this was naturally the Dutch printer Coster—introduced a basic innovation: the invention of the printing press. Part of the available secondary literature on the triumphal progress of the printing press over the centuries is then resourcefully examined in the light of this theory, which leads her to the conclusion that book production throughout the centuries has progressed through the various phases of the life cycle sketched above, and that in this respect the book is no different from other products.¹⁹¹

Although it is very tempting to comment on this daring approach—is it, in fact, a fundamental innovation?—it goes beyond the scope of the present study.¹⁹² It is more relevant to give a moment's thought to what prompted De Kruif's exercise: the alleged stagnation of the book market in the second half of the eighteenth century. De Kruif based her findings mainly on the developments in book ownership that emerge from her own research on Hague estate inventories. On the basis of three sample periods—1700-10, 1750-60 and 1790-1800—it appears that book ownership increased chiefly in the second period and stabilised after 1750. This finding could be considered the crown witness in the case against the reading revolution. In addition, she calls on several other witnesses: the developments in the Hague book trade that emerge from Kossmann's research into the number of booksellers active there; the results of the study of Van Benthem' and Tijl's customer records; and two authors, one who wrote for journal *De Filosoof* (The Philosopher) and the other an eye-witness we have already met, an editor of *De Koopman* (The Merchant).¹⁹³ In keeping with the style of this book, we will start with the testimony of this last person.

As De Kruif herself remarks, when bringing the analysis of reading behaviour and the reception of literature in ego-documents up for discussion,

¹⁹⁰ For a more extensive, more subtle and wonderfully clear explanation of this theory, see De Kruif, *Liefhebbers en gewoontelezers*, 135-44.

¹⁹¹ See previous note.

¹⁹² This term is used for bio-bibliographic research into publishers from the past, as well as for research into 'auctions, remainders and changes in the distribution structure' (*ibid.*, 89-90).

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 125-35.

the testimony of individuals can be a pitfall for the researcher.¹⁹⁴ If this is true of the ego-document research to which she refers—including that carried out by John Brewer, Robert Darnton and Carlo Ginzburg, all of whom have engaged in thorough source criticism—then it is all the more true of the observations made by the editor of *De Koopman*, who was probably the chameleon-like bread-and-butter writer Willem Ockers, a master of disguise in a newspaper not entirely devoid of satire.¹⁹⁵ In *De Koopman* various characters, such as the previously mentioned Henry Misprint, complain about the decline of the book trade. It is dangerous to take them at their word, however. The lament about a public more interested in cheap trash than high-quality books must be considered within the context of the much broader debate on the ‘reading mania’ presumed to be widespread at that time.¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, the manner of argumentation used in *De Koopman* is partly rhetorical and should therefore not be interpreted as a reflection of reality. If this article had indeed described the reality of the situation, the results of De Kruif’s own research into Hague estate inventories could be called into question. If the reading public had in fact shown a sudden preference for ‘cheap trash’, it was these works that remained hidden from view in estate inventories, comprising ‘a few more books of little value’, which the notary’s clerk thought unnecessary to specify. This brings us—because quantitative research also benefits from illustrative examples—to a more fundamental issue.

The disadvantages of in-depth research have been pointed out by De Kruif, but the bird’s-eye view of the material also has its limitations. One side effect of the political upheavals that took place in the last decades of the eighteenth century was the increase—albeit temporary—in ephemeral publications.¹⁹⁷ In addition, as Johannes’s study shows, after 1750 the

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 51–58.

¹⁹⁵ With thanks to Ton Jongenelen, whose years of research on Willem Ockers and his work has enabled him to track down many of this author’s pseudonyms. His forthcoming dissertation, in which the bread-and-butter writers Nicolaas Hoefnagel and J.B.F. van Goch will play a prominent role, will add a whole new dimension to our knowledge of the eighteenth century.

¹⁹⁶ The internal dynamics of this debate will be examined in greater detail in Chapter Four and the Epilogue.

¹⁹⁷ In her book De Kruif stresses that her calculations, based on the books listed in estate inventories, ‘permit a few cautious conclusions ... inasmuch as they do not concern ephemeral printed matter such as pamphlets and the like’. She goes on to conclude that ‘in The Hague in the eighteenth century, as far as numbers of books are concerned, no reading revolution is discernible’ (De Kruif, *Liefhebbers en gewoontelezers*, 114). On the flood of pamphlets, see Brouwer, *Lezen en schrijven*, 78). See also N.C.F. van Sas, ‘Opiniepers en

number of periodicals grew 'gradually and steadily' from the seventy-five journals available in 1750 to almost two hundred in 1800.¹⁹⁸ It is quite possible that journal-buying increased at the expense of book-buying.

To gain a better understanding of this turbulent period, as well as its effects and aftershocks, we return to our eye-witness, the innovative and successful publisher Pieter Blussé, who, as evidenced by remarks in his autobiography, noticed little stagnation:

Having spoken of my early beginnings, I now recall a period of twenty years (1776-95), during which I was privileged to enjoy continued welfare, enthusiasm for my work, and prosperity, to the extent that not only did my business, both at home and abroad, grow in substance and consequence, but I also found ample means happily to supply my growing family with everything they needed.¹⁹⁹

He contrasts his material prosperity, which he owes to his book business, with the personal uncertainties occasioned by the political situation of those years, in other words, to 'the most violent State tempests, in which every unindifferent person became involved, which also affected me in no small measure'. This remark leads us away from the bookshop and all its organisational changes, and makes us focus on the political changes that took place in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

politieke cultuur' in F. Grijzenhout, W.W. Mijnhardt and N.C.F. van Sas (eds.), *Voor vaderland en vrijheid. De revolutie van de patriotten* (Amsterdam 1987) 97-131, 111-12 and Johannes, *De barometer van de smaak*, 169-72.

¹⁹⁸ Johannes, *De barometer van de smaak*, 33-34, and Graph 6 on p. 34.

¹⁹⁹ The crisis he observed in the book trade occurred later, in the years after 1795, 'which, at least initially, were not favourable for my business'.

CHAPTER THREE

A BOOKSELLER WITH 'A FEW FRIENDS': SOCIAL NETWORK AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT



11. Undated painting of Pieter Blussé Sr (1748-1823) by G.A. Schmidt, oil on panel. Private collection.



12. Cut-out silhouette of Sophia Arnolda Vermeer (1753-1819). Museum Mr. Simon van Gijn.

My spouse and I, much occupied in our own separate circles, had little need of diversions. We chiefly associated with our affectionate parents and a few friends.¹

After twenty prosperous years, the starry-eyed young couple wandering through an idyllic landscape under Cupid's eye had become the middle-aged parents of numerous children. Pieter and Sophia had eleven children altogether—the first in 1772 and the last in 1797—and ten of them, seven sons and three daughters, survived to adulthood.² This paterfamilias still

¹ GAD, unsorted BFA, box 51.

² Abraham (1772–Leiden 1850), Hendrik-Johannes (5 August 1774–25 September 1774), Hendrik (1776–Dordrecht 1802), Adolph (1779–Paris 1846), Cornelia Elisabeth (1781–Wijk bij

had his romantic moments, although he was no longer the target of Cupid's darts—now he concerned himself with other people's love lives. In 1793, for instance, his good friend and contemporary J.F. Hoijman asked him to do his best to find him a suitable spouse living in Dordrecht. Hoijman accompanied his request for matchmaking services with a whole list of things he was looking for in a wife, so his letters give us a good picture of the social circles to which the two men thought they belonged.

It was very unlikely that Pieter would succeed in his mission. His friend was extremely demanding. Three candidates Pieter had previously suggested, the Van K. sisters, had all failed the test.

The youngest, who seems not unwilling, is shapely and plump—without animation—her appearance is gloomy and proud—I call this one L' Amante Statue—the middle sister (and this is the intended one) is of discerning judgment, a fine intellect and a serene manner—a gentle and forbearing disposition—But—she is extremely weak, indeed quite sickly, and has nothing pleasing about her appearance—the oldest is La Sultane Favorite; a very fine, attractive woman—of a lively disposition—a good character—but amazingly quick-tempered—who is able to use her own judgment and reason—This was actually my type—But now it comes down to liking—and that remains—immeasurably distant.³

Hoijman claimed that he would only be satisfied with 'true love—for which the heart beats with the deepest longing and the soul is entirely absorbed in the object of desire'. Such terms, however, were too vague to help Pieter in his selection of suitable candidates and so he enquired, 'Would it be possible, by springtime, to find about *half a dozen*, or maybe 3 or 4, within reach and put them on the provisional list?' Hoijman then came up with a more detailed profile:

then what I should like is a young woman who is reasonably pretty and sweet-tempered—with a cheerful or friendly disposition—who has sound knowledge of worldly affairs and household management—in accordance with modern tastes—but definitely not dressed in *the height of fashion*—about thirty years of age; a few years older or younger—but rather *younger* than older—from a good family—even a middle-class one—by this I mean, even if she does not come from the circles of the most prominent merchants

Duurstede 1871), Elisabeth Sophia (1784-Twello 1867), Pieter (1786-Dordrecht 1869), Jan Jacob (1788-Dordrecht 1879), Adriaan Gijsbert (1791-Koudekerke 1834), Sophia Frederika (1793-Arnhem 1875), François Frederik (1797-Dordrecht 1832) (GAD, BFA, Family Booklet, inv. 10; Ibid. unsorted, box 12; *Nederland's Patriciaat* 1923, 1-13, 483).

³ GAD, unsorted BFA, box 2, 29 August 1793.

or others of the beau monde—it is difficult to explain this in a Republican tone, but I do not doubt you will grasp my meaning.

We may gather from this passage—which grudgingly admits of the possibility of acquiring a wife from the bourgeoisie—that Hoijman supposed himself to be a rung higher than that on the social ladder. He also considered his friend Pieter to be a member of the 'beau monde'. After all, Hoijman would scarcely have dared to use so complacent a tone towards someone who himself belonged to the barely tolerated 'middle class'. The ideal image that Pieter had cherished during the days of his engagement to Sophia—that of the virtuous Justus, young man of humble birth—seems to have vanished altogether from this heart-to-heart between gentlemen of standing. Since his marriage, Pieter had evidently advanced not only in business, but in social status too.

A Clubbable Man

Unlike his friend and colleague Willem Holtrop, Pieter was not a member of the Order of Freemasons. Nor do we find his name on the list of members of Dordrecht reading clubs,⁴ with which he maintained no more than business contacts as a book supplier.⁵ He was not a member of the Dordrecht Society of Physics, a company of men interested in scientific experiments.⁶ And although the stream of love letters with which the young Pieter had advanced his suit to Sophia might lead us to expect otherwise, he did not join any of the five literary societies to which his father belonged. Apparently, he preferred to seek companionship at a club. He was a member of *De Harmonie*, a club where one could relax, enjoy a drink, read the paper and chat with other members. He also records in his autobiographical notes that he attended the weekly meetings of *Pictura*, an art club. But his other interests were of a more practical, not to say useful nature.

⁴ It would seem that Abraham and Pieter Blussé did feel an affinity to these societies, but deliberately refrained from joining them in order to avoid any suspicion of a conflict with their business interests. See also a eulogy written by Abraham Blussé in 1790 on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the society *Leeslust* (The Joy of Reading) (Abraham Blussé, *Zinnebeelden van den tijd. Toegewijd aan het genootschap Leeslust*, ex. GAD 106.508).

⁵ GAD, first reading club 1787-1890, inv. 12-17 contains lists of books bought from Abraham Blussé. Blussé and Van Braam were the regular suppliers of books until 1790, when Van Braam was replaced by the bookseller H. de Haas.

⁶ This society, whose aim was 'to work together to enjoy the practice of the several branches of physics', had twelve members and existed until 1 January 1812 (GAD, Dordrechtsch Fysisch Gezelschap, inv. 1).

On 23 August 1800 he joined the *Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen*—popularly known as the Nut—a society for the promotion of the common good, which, among other things, advocated better education for children of the poor, and circulated educational reading matter for the masses.⁷ Pieter was comparatively late in joining this society, which had been founded sixteen years earlier. He was much quicker off the mark on 16 January 1778, however, when he became co-founder and secretary of the Dordrecht section of an allied organization, the *Oeconomische Tak* (Economic Branch). Unlike the Nut, which proposed tackling economic decline by changing people's attitudes, the *Oeconomische Tak* urged the implementation of economic reforms to counteract the huge rise in unemployment and the poverty it had caused in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Increased competition from neighbouring countries had caused the labour-intensive sectors of fishing and industry to go into decline and so there were calls for mercantilist policies: buy Dutch! There were numerous proposals to create employment, essay contents were held and small factories were even set up—most of which, however, were soon struggling.⁸ This movement, with its aim of restoring the glory of the Dutch Golden Age and reviving trade and industry, was fighting a rearguard action in a macro-economic constellation that had changed completely.⁹

The Economic Branch proved so popular that in 1777, the year it was founded, it already had 3,000 members, divided into 55 sections.¹⁰ In Dordrecht, too, the stream of applicants far exceeded expectations. When the Society was set up, the idea had been to hold one annual meeting, but the increase in membership soon made it necessary to hold a second one.¹¹ The list of Dordrecht members, kept scrupulously up to date by Pieter, features his own name among growing numbers of Dordrecht notables,

⁷ GAD, *Departement Dordrecht van de Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen* (the Dordrecht section of the Society for the Promotion of the Common Good), inv. 1, 23 August 1800: Pieter Blussé was enrolled as a new member.

⁸ Business interests dominated the Dordrecht section of the Economic Branch, as we see from the attempts by a number of members to persuade the governors of the local orphanage, poor house and parish school to release from school as many children as possible 'who are so desperately need for manual work of all kinds', so that they could use them as cheap labour. Esseboom, *Onderwysinghe der jeught*, 119.

⁹ See among others J. de Vries, *De economische achteruitgang der Republiek in de achttiende eeuw* (2nd edition; Leiden 1968); *Ibid.*, 'De Oeconomisch-patriottische beweging', *De Nieuwe Stem* (1952) 723-30; J. Bierens de Haan, *Van Oeconomische Tak tot Nederlandsche Maatschappij voor Nijverheid en Handel 1777-1952* (Haarlem 1952).

¹⁰ De Vries, 'De Oeconomisch-patriottische beweging', 729.

¹¹ GAH, Archief *Oeconomische Tak* (arch. 28), inv. 24.4, 17 January 1778.

including some we have met before: Pieter's competitor, the bookseller Pieter van Braam, who was the treasurer, as well as Pieter's former advisor in matrimonial matters, Herman Cornelis de Witt.

It is evident from the numerous letters he wrote to the headquarters in Haarlem, expressing the views of the Dordrecht section in his capacity as its secretary, that Pieter actively contributed to shaping the society's ideas. These letters cover a range of subjects, from a possible 'division of interests' to the desirability of cultivating hemp in the Republic.¹² When it came to Dordrecht's response to a national proposal to encourage the translation of foreign writings into Dutch, Pieter was on home ground. He wrote: 'The item relating to the translation of works is considered unnecessary, since there can be no doubt, and experience confirms, that foreign writings worthy of consideration are soon rendered in our mother tongue in this country.'¹³ Clearly, Pieter made every effort to promote such translations. His commitment, as a publisher, to the movement for economic recovery is reflected in an authoritative 24-volume series on trades and occupations published by the firm of Blussé between 1788 and 1820. This *Volledige beschrijving van alle konsten, ambachten, handwerken, fabrieken, trafieken, derzelver werkhuizen, gereedschappen enz. Ten deele overgenomen uit de beroemdste buitenlandsche werken: vermeerderd met de theorie en praktijk der beste inlandsche konstenaaren en handwerkslieden* (Complete description of all the arts, trades, crafts, factories, markets and their workplaces, tools etc. Taken in part from the most renowned foreign works: with a supplement on the theory and practice of the finest domestic artists and artisans)—an expensive undertaking and one still unique in the annals of Dutch publishing—was Blussé's contribution to the broad dissemination of practical knowledge on a wide range of subjects, from sugar refining, paper-making and madder cultivation to bee-keeping, soap-making and bookbinding.

By the time the first volume of this series, which was inspired by the ideals of the Economic Branch, came out in 1788, Pieter himself not been an active member of the movement for more than a year. On 4 June 1787 he resigned his post as secretary, although he asked that he be allowed to continue attending meetings of the board of directors. It may be that, like many others, he had grown disillusioned because their efforts had been fruitless. After its promising start, the movement fizzled out in the 1780s.

¹² Ibid., inv. 12, 13.

¹³ Ibid., inv. 24-7, 19 November 1778.

By 1795, the membership had shrunk from the 3,000 of 1777 to just a few hundred.¹⁴ It is more likely, though, that in those years Pieter was too busy to fulfil all his posts, and gave priority to the church and politics.

In the same year, 1787, Pieter and his father Abraham Blussé became elders in the Reformed Church.¹⁵ Two years previously Pieter had joined the Grootkoopmansgilde—the general merchants' guild,¹⁶ to which the cream of the Dordrecht merchants belonged. Abraham, evidently a member of this guild already, was acting as their bookkeeper in this period; in 1786 he had been promoted to master of the guild.¹⁷ In 1786, both Pieter and Abraham were also elected to one of the most important governing bodies in the city, the *Goede Mannen van Veertigen* (Forty Good Men). This council of forty respected citizens—all of whom were or had been married—was responsible for nominating the sheriffs and members of the city council.¹⁸ Abraham Blussé was appointed their chairman.¹⁹

In the pursuit of their aspirations and their active participation in social life, Abraham and Pieter were aided by the spirit of the times. In the past a bid for power of this kind would have been almost unthinkable for people like the Blussés, who were, after all, only prosperous tradesmen; they were not members of the established Dutch patriciate.

The Dutch Patriots

An Enthusiastic Militiaman

Although at certain times in the seventeenth century ordinary citizens might become members of a town council, in the course of the eighteenth

¹⁴ There were now 274 members, spread over 11 sections. De Vries, 'De Oeconomisch-patriottische beweging', 729.

¹⁵ Herenboekje 1787.

¹⁶ GAD, Grootkoopmansgilde, inv. 175. The general merchants guild was an umbrella organization that people could join at the same time as holding membership of another, trade-related guild (with thanks to Erik Palme for the information). Pieter's registration as a guild member taking his first oath, which means that he had made his masterpiece for this guild, tells us that he had not previously been a member of another guild. This is not as surprising as it may seem, since the Dordrecht booksellers were members of a brotherhood, not a guild; see J. Sels, *Beschrijving der stad Dordrecht* (Dordrecht 1854) 238-40.

¹⁷ Abraham's position, first as bookkeeper and later as master of this guild, appears from his signature and title on a number of petitions published in the newspaper, *De Post van den Neder-Rhijn* (1786) no. 478, 82-86.

¹⁸ Van Dalen, *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht*, 188.

¹⁹ Herenboekje 1787, 3.

century the Republic's ruling elite became increasingly exclusive. The mounting dissatisfaction of the middle class with the dichotomy between their growing economic power and their lack of influence in public affairs ultimately came to a head during the disastrous Fourth Anglo-Dutch War of 1780-84. The Dutch Republic was no match for England. For years the stadholder had been implementing cut-backs in the Dutch navy and now the country was paying the price for this policy. The tide could not even be turned by an initiative like that of Pieter Blussé, who in 1781, together with a handful of Dordrecht notables, founded a National Society for the Encouragement and Rewarding of Dutch Heroic Virtue²⁰—which was to provide medals and annual pensions for wounded soldiers and for the widows and orphans of those who died in battle.

It was not difficult to find a scapegoat for this debacle: blame fell upon the stadholder William V. A shared hatred of the stadholder's power united the regents who opposed the stadholder's clientelism and the citizen-democrats who demanded their say in government. These unlikely bedfellows called themselves 'Patriots', true lovers of their native land. But their opponents, the Orangists, referred to them by the far less flattering name of 'Kezen'—a word derived from the first name of one of their leaders, Cornelis (Kees) de Gijselaar, the Pensionary of Dordrecht. De Gijselaar, the Pensionary of Haarlem, Adriaan van Zeebergh, and the Amsterdam

²⁰ This society, the *Vaderlandse Maatschappij ter aanmoediging en belooning der Nederlandsche heldendeugd*, called upon 'every bachelor, indeed every householder, whose circumstances in any way permit ... to volunteer in the service of his country and to fight as befits a Batavian', thus to go into eternity covered in glory. Since it was not possible for everyone to quit hearth and home in this way—people who remained tied to their own town and dwelling by 'national, church, trade or domestic interests' were of course excluded—it was seen as just 'that the latter should acknowledge the love and bravery of the former, protect them, and with true love in return, recompense them with fitting acclaim and rewards; or, when they are struck by disaster and misfortune, mitigate this and, as far as possible, make it bearable'. Ten members had already enrolled in Dordrecht, among them Abraham and Pieter Blussé and three other members of the Economic Branch, J. de Witt, J.S. van Hoogstraten and J. Tissel. The organization envisaged for this bore a strong resemblance to that of the economic movement, except that the headquarters would be decentralized. The plan was to have as many headquarters as there were towns where admiralty boards were located. 'Ordinary sections' would be established in other towns where there were more than six members. These would be headed by an Executive Committee consisting of a chairman, treasurer and secretary, who would render an account to the headquarters to which they belonged every two months. However, the movement appears to have been confined to Dordrecht. No information has survived regarding a society of this name (*Proeve van een ontwerp ter opregting eener Vaderlandsche maatschappij, ter aanmoediging en belooning der Nederlandsche heldendeugd*. Dordrecht, A. Blussé & Son, 1781).

Pensionary, François van Berckel, formed the famous triumvirate who in the early 1780s developed a secret plan to reduce Stadholder William V's power to the bare minimum.²¹

Opposing them was the stadholder's party, the Orangists. Among its members were the more conservative of the regents and courtiers, along with low-grade civil servants who owed their jobs to the stadholder. The prince also had a strong following among members of the lower class—such as the Amsterdam ships' carpenters, who traditionally supported the House of Orange in an attempt to counteract the power of the regents. At the beginning of the 1780s these groups plunged—with a fierce passion unprecedented in the Dutch Republic—into a publicity war in which a new medium, the political newspaper, joined the Republic's long pamphleteering tradition.

In papers like the Patriot *Post van den Neder-Rhijn* and *De Politieke Kruijer*—as well as the Orangist *Post naar den Neder-Rhijn* and the *Politieke Kruijers-knecht*—brought into being in direct response to them, the Patriots and Orangists fought a fierce polemic battle for public opinion.²² The influence of a paper like the *Post van den Neder-Rhijn* with its circulation of 2,400 should not be underestimated. Nevertheless, it was not a newspaper but an old-fashioned pamphlet—the famous address to the people of the Netherlands *Aan het volk van Nederland* written by Johan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol—which historians believe had the greatest impact.

This anonymous pamphlet first appeared on 26 September 1781. Despite a ban on printing or disseminating it, it was in fact reprinted four times in that same year.²³ Van der Capellen summed up the complicated two-hundred-year history of the Republic as a woeful tale of abuse of power by successive Orangist stadholders, plummeting to a historic low under the rule of Stadholder William V:

Is not your way of life, to the deep distress of your wise and gracious Princess, entirely brutish? Are you not seen drunk in public daily, so that you have

²¹ For this triumvirate see S. Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*.

²² See N.C.F. van Sas, 'Opiniepers en politieke cultuur' in F. Grijzenhout, W.W. Mijnhardt and N.C.F. van Sas eds., *Voor vaderland en vrijheid. De revolutie van de patriotten* (Amsterdam 1987) 97–131.

²³ J.D. van der Capellen tot den Pol, *Aan het Volk van Nederland*, W.F. Wertheim and A.H. Wertheim-Gijse-Weenink eds. (Weesp 1981) 8. See also H.L. Zwitzer ed., *Aan het volk van Nederland: het patriottisch program uit 1781. Joan Derk van der Capellen* (Amsterdam 1987).

become a figure of scorn and contempt to one and all? What are your summer entertainments at Het Loo? Foolish, childish, sometimes worse!²⁴

The core of Van der Capellen's analysis was the historic bond between England and the House of Orange which, he alleged, had become the pooles of the English and in so doing—witness the outcome of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch war—had brought the Dutch Republic to the brink of ruin:

Yes, Prince William, it is all your fault! I repeat: both the fact that we are not permitted to ally with mighty France and America—although this would be the only way to achieve a swift and honest peace so that our trade could flourish once again—and the fact that, like the representatives of the English parliament in the past, the American ambassador can find no willing ear here, so that our country runs the danger of being entirely ruined by England and of calling down upon ourselves if not the hatred then certainly the indifference of America, and of being paid back in coin of the same kind—it is all your fault!²⁵

In order to save the Republic from downfall and destruction, it was imperative to restore in all its former glory the natural sovereignty of the people: the power enjoyed long ago by their forefathers, the Free Batavians, who had defended themselves successfully against the Romans. Citizens were urged to demand a national inquiry into the causes of the present war, to organize mass petitions, and to form democratically elected committees that would act as advisory bodies for the municipal and national authorities. A necessary condition for a process of democratization of this kind was freedom of the press, so that the public could be informed about recent developments and make up their own minds. And lastly, properly-trained and well-armed civic militias should be established as a matter of urgency. These fighting units should be used not only to oppose foreign forces, but also to act as protection against domestic dictatorship.

Throughout the country there was a huge response to this last call to arms. Dordrecht took the lead. On 26 July 1783, the voluntary military unit called *De Vrijheid* (Liberty) was officially commissioned under the sympathetic eyes of the city pensionary, De Gijselaar, and the burgomaster, Ocker Gevaerts.²⁶ In fact, this group had been meeting informally since January

²⁴ Ibid., 135.

²⁵ Ibid., 130-31.

²⁶ Compare the establishment in 1785 of *De Jonge Schuts* militia in Den Bosch. The political objectives of this corps remained implicit for much longer than was the case elsewhere; see M. Prak, *Republikeinse veelheid, democratische enkelvoud. Sociale veranderingen in het Revolutietijdvak s-Hertogenbosch 1770-1820* (Nijmegen 1999) [= *Sun Memoria*] 152-53).



13. Anonymous print, ridiculing the admission of women to the civic militia (in Dordrecht in 1784). In contrast to what the print suggests, the female members of the militia kept well away from drills and shooting exercises. Instead, they concentrated on fundraising and embroidering flags and banners. Dordrecht Municipal Archives.

and had held regular exercises, training under a professional drill sergeant and learning how to handle firearms.²⁷ By April of that year, they were deemed proficient enough to give a public demonstration of their skills. Among them were Pieter Blussé, one of the first to join, and his good friend Pieter van Beest, an initiator of the scheme. When the unit became official, the two men were honoured with a position on the committee. They each received a silver medal which they were requested to 'wear on appropriate occasions so they could be distinguished from other members'.²⁸ Their tasks included acting as delegates at national gatherings of militia units, speaking to municipal authorities—and preaching to the converted.

It seems that they fulfilled this duty at the celebrations on 21 June 1784 to mark the inauguration of a larger parade ground.²⁹ The committee members had decided to try to match the generosity of one of the members, Mr A. Pompe van Meerdevoort, who had had a standard made for *De Vrijheid* at his own expense. They presented two 'valuable brass drums inlaid with silver panels' and devoted a lengthy speech to this donation. There is no record of the orator's name. However, the baroque language and the characteristic embellishments—phrases like 'may I say' and 'then, I repeat'—suggest that it was Pieter Blussé. He was certainly the representative who addressed a group of upper-class ladies from Dordrecht a month later. As a token of their support and approval, they had presented the corps with both a standard and 'two valuable drums' and, as a generous afterthought, a pipe-rack.³⁰ After a Mr van Meteren had spoken on behalf of these patriotic women, explaining the motives behind their gifts—'With this drum and flag we will be in the vanguard in the service of our fatherland, although we are weak vessels'³¹—the floor was given to Pieter Blussé to say a word of thanks. His rhetorical talent had in no way diminished since his courting days.

Beneath the open skies, at the request of my brothers and in the presence of a vast gathering, I take my stand and exchange the agreeable burden of a musket for the task I have been given, in spite of myself, of public speaker.³²

²⁷ Mr Cramer, deputy officer of the Pontonniers (G. Paape, *De geschiedenis der gewapende burgerkorpsschen in Nederland* (Delft 1787) 1-10).

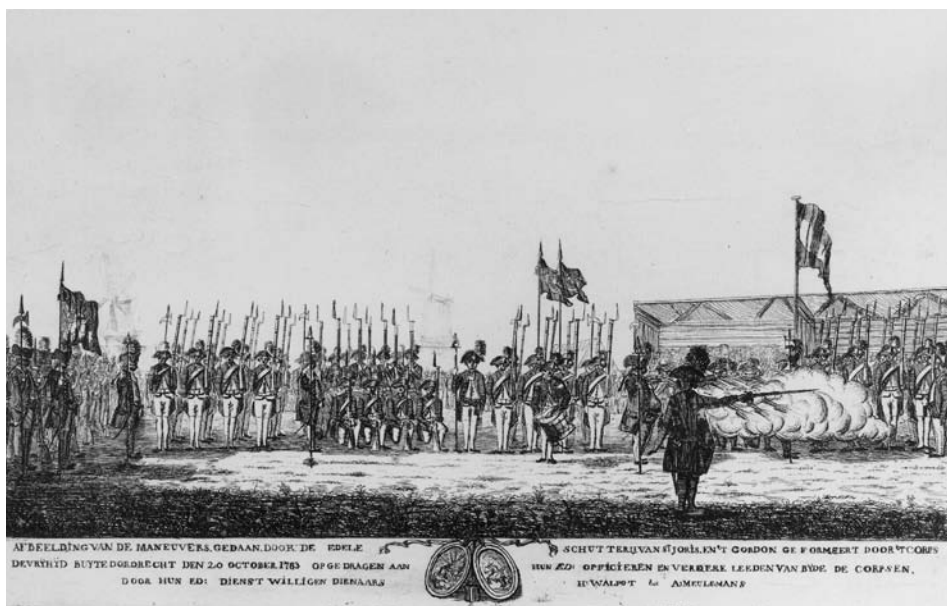
²⁸ Pieter van Beest's medal has survived and the family still has it (GAD, Stichtingsakte Stichting Blussé van Oud-Alblas, HS 2694).

²⁹ See Paape, *De geschiedenis der gewapende burgerkorpsschen*, 32 ff.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 57 ff.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 60.

³² *Ibid.*, 61.



14. On 20 October 1783 the Sint-Joris militia and the military drill society 'De Vrijheid' op de Stadsweide (now the Beverwijckspelen) performed military exercises and a parade. The Dordrecht printer Hendrik Walpot honoured the occasion by issuing a commemorative print. Dordrecht Municipal Archives.

The martial tone of his speech suggests that Pieter welcomed the opportunity to exchange his bookseller's existence for the rattle of rifles in the open air three times a week.³³ Encouraged by the ladies to 'continue on the chosen path with manly tread', delighted that they 'like us, when needs must, would choose a noble death over a contemptible life' and emboldened to 'count all dangers as mere trifles and to show no mercy', he addressed his 'comrades in arms', exhorting them by 'attentive observation of the arms drills' to pay tribute to 'purified Liberty, untarnished justice and sincere love of their fellow citizens', and to set a good example for 'worthy family men' and the youth of 'Batavia'. Among these young men was Pieter's oldest son, Abraham junior. He was thirteen at the time and considered

³³ Members met every Monday and Wednesday evening between six and seven p.m. to drill and practise handling firearms. They also held a full practice every Saturday in preparation for the shooting event that took place at five o'clock on every first Monday of the month (GAD, Sociëteit De Vrijheid, Inleiding inventaris, 3).

too young to take part in the military exercises. His father did, though, expect him to watch the rifle drill on Mondays and Wednesdays.³⁴

During its four-year existence, De Vrijheid saw no military action and Pieter was never obliged to convert his bellicose language into deeds—although at times it was a close-run thing. On 24 January 1785, for instance, the men of De Vrijheid, together with the civic guard of St George, a medieval archers' body that had been revived, were charged by the city council to guard Dordrecht against a possible attack by riotous Orangists from the region of Alblasserwaard. However, these youths from Sliedrecht contented themselves with molesting travellers and passers-by on their home territory.³⁵ On another occasion, in the summer of 1785, it looked for a while as if the Dordrecht civic guard would go the aid of their brothers-in-arms in Utrecht. Swift calculations revealed, however, that even with the combined forces of the Frisian, Holland, Utrecht and Overijssel civic guards³⁶ little could be achieved against the vastly superior numbers of the stadholder's army. De Vrijheid consequently confined itself to lending moral and political support.

Then in the autumn of 1786 it briefly appeared that the Dordrecht civic guard would take up arms in the defence of Utrecht. We read in Abraham Blussé's *Afscheidingsgroet aan mijne naar Utrecht ter hulpspoedende medeburgers* (A farewell salutation to my fellow citizens, speeding to the assistance of Utrecht) that on 12 September a 'manly company of proud heroes' set out from Dordrecht, ready to repel the attack of the 'despotic' Stadholder William V. The expected attack, however, did not take place and less than six weeks later the delegation from Dordrecht was welcomed home with a new composition by Abraham Blussé, this time titled *Welkomsgroet ...* (A welcome greeting to my fellow citizens, returning home from Utrecht).³⁷

³⁴ This appears from a daily timetable drawn up by Pieter for his son Abraham (GAD, unsorted BFA, box 23).

³⁵ P. Schotel, 'De Dordrechtse schuttersgilden in de Patriottentijd, 1782-1787', *Kwartaal en Teken* 10 (1984) nos. 2-3, 19-36, 23.

³⁶ The civic militia had a total of 13,517 armed citizens (Schotel, 'De Dordrechtse schuttersgilden', 25).

³⁷ 'Waardt gij niet derwaards heen getoogen,/ Met andre helden uit den kring/ Der burgerlijke wapening,/ Dan had zij mooglijk toegevloogen,/ En door het onbesuisd geweld,/ Hoe moedig ook de burgers waaren,/ Met moordlust in die vest gevaaren,/ En elk berooft, of neergevelt.' Both poems, together with another eulogy by Abraham Blussé titled 'To the noble company, the civic guard of arquebusiers', without name or place of the publisher, are printed in a separate supplement held in Dordrecht Municipal Archive (GAD, unsorted BFA, box 42). It seems most likely that Blussé himself was the publisher. Abraham's poem

In this paean he suggested that the presence of extra forces had dissuaded the stadholder from besieging the city:

Had you not marched thither
 With other heroes from the ranks
 Of the civil militia,
 They might have struck
 And with unbridled violence,
 Courageous though the citizens were,
 Entered the town with murderous intent
 And robbed or felled every one.

It must certainly have been a factor in the stadholder's decision to withdraw. But the free corps gained far more concrete results with the pen and the collection-box than it did with sword and sabre. That was probably the point Pieter wished to make when he added the somewhat cryptic comment to his autobiographical notes: '1784, 22 March. A committee for collecting for national flood victims', followed by the names of the members of this new committee.³⁸ Pieter Blussé (P.B. in the note) was charged with organizing a collection among members of the free corps and the civic guard for the benefit of victims of a recent flood disaster. This was one of the first charitable actions in the Republic not to be organized under the aegis of the Reformed Church; just over 393 guilders was collected in Dordrecht.³⁹ Later, in May 1785, when the Amsterdam publisher and editor of the journal *De Politieke Krayer*, J. Verlem and J.C. Hespe, were sentenced to imprisonment and a fine of 3,000 guilders because of their support for the Patriots in their publications, the Dordrecht free corps and brother organizations from other towns rose to their defence. Once again, Pieter Blussé was among those who organized a collection to help pay the fines and legal expenses of the two men, who had meanwhile been pronounced martyrs in the Patriot cause.⁴⁰ Shortly after this, as a mark of respect and gratitude, De Vrijheid invited the editor, Mr Hespe, to become an honorary member of the corps.⁴¹

Ave atque Vale (Farewell) also appeared in the *Post van den Neder-Rhijn* of 12 September 1786.

³⁸ GAD, BFA, inv. 10.

³⁹ Paape, *De geschiedenis der gewapende burgerkorpsschen*, 29.

⁴⁰ Paape, *De geschiedenis der gewapende burgerkorpsschen*, 67,68; Van Sas, 'Opiniepers en politieke cultuur', 109.

⁴¹ Paape, *De geschiedenis der gewapende burgerkorpsschen*, 69; see also Van Sas, 'Opiniepers en politieke cultuur', 109.

The free corps was also successful as a political pressure group. Together with other militia groups, it was the armed wing of the combined assembly known as the *Gecombineerde Vergadering*, set up in 1785 with the masters of the trade guilds.⁴² At first, the requests they made to the Dordrecht city council were chiefly concerned with local political questions. For instance, they asked the council to refuse to send troops paid by the province of Holland to reinforce the stadholder's army. This request was granted and, indeed, set the tone for other towns and cities in the States assembly.⁴³ The Orange riots in Rotterdam the previous year—led by a fishwife, Kaat Mossel—had caused considerable alarm among the Dordrecht civic guard. They criticized the Rotterdam city council for its lenience towards the rioters. Things had got so out of hand that people had actually been killed.⁴⁴ The victims came not from the Patriots' side, however, but from the Orangist crowds. The leader of the Rotterdam free corps and his men had panicked when faced with the violence of the Orangist mob and had fired shots wildly in all directions. The Rotterdam city council reprimanded them severely.⁴⁵ The Dordrecht militia took a very different view; they felt the action was quite understandable. At their request, the Dordrecht council took the case to the court of the States of Holland. When the committee appointed for the purpose demanded greater legal powers so that they could oppose steps taken by the Rotterdam authorities to undermine this investigation, including compiling a competing report, they were again supported by the Dordrecht militia, who petitioned the Dordrecht council to argue the committee's case in the States of Holland and urged them not to allow the Rotterdam government to pull the wool over their eyes. Eight officers of the civic guard signed this petition—among them Pieter van Beest and Pieter Blussé.⁴⁶

Pieter's involvement in these issues and his support of the Patriots' demand for public administration are also reflected in his publisher's list. In 1784, in collaboration with the Rotterdam publisher Jan Krap, he published the first volume of what was ultimately to be a six-part, twelve-hundred-page series titled *Verzamelingen van stukken, betrekkelyk tot het zenden eener commissie van ... de heeren Staten van Holland en Westvriesland, naar*

⁴² See Schotel, 'De Dordrechtse schuttersgilden', 25-30.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁴⁴ GAD, Oud stadsarchief 1572-1795, inv. 151, appendix no. 110.

⁴⁵ See also P. Geyl, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse stam* (6 vols; Amsterdam/Antwerp 1962) III, 1315.

⁴⁶ GAD, Oud stadsarchief 1572-1795, inv. 151, appendix no. 110.

Rotterdam—a collection of reports and papers dealing with the sending of representatives of the States of Holland and West Friesland to Rotterdam.⁴⁷ The purpose of this bulky publication was to offer citizens (those who had sufficient perseverance) the opportunity to form a measured opinion about the causes of the Rotterdam riots and the identity of the ringleaders.⁴⁸

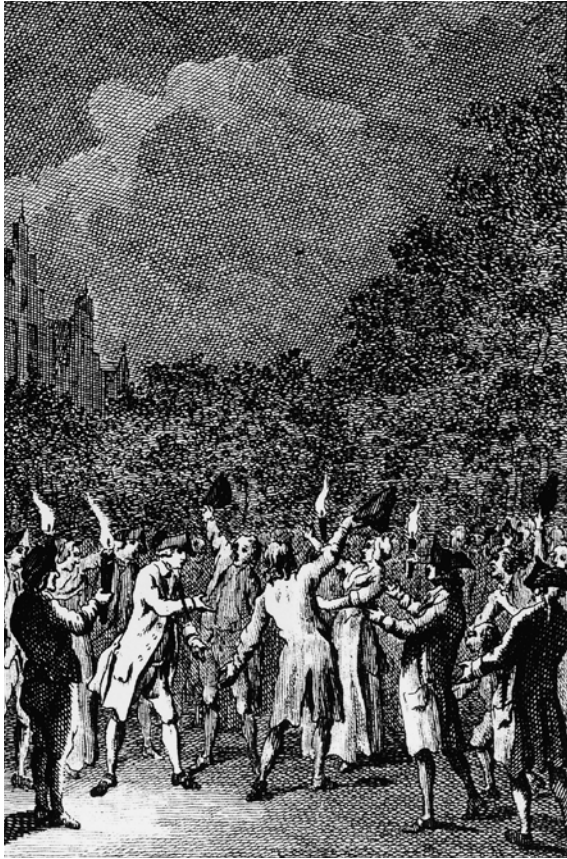
It would seem that the views of the majority of the Dordrecht city council and the combined assembly coincided on this issue, but this changed in the course of 1785, when the assembly began to take an active part in city government, proposing and forcing through ever more radical measures. Here, the Dordrecht Patriots were following a general trend.

The democratic Patriots in many other towns and cities became increasingly conscious of the rift between the interests of the citizens and those of the regents who supported reform. In June 1785 there had been a national gathering of militia at which all present had sworn a solemn oath, the *Akte van Verbintenis*, in which they declared that they would endeavour to protect the 'true Republican form of government' against any form of aggression by domestic or foreign forces, that they would root out existing social ills, restore lost rights to the citizenry and strive for a 'people's government by representation'. Such a government was certainly quite different from that envisioned by the 'Aristocrats'. Indeed, this latter group was accused of attempting 'to overthrow the stadholdership, to destroy the power of the people, and to appropriate for themselves and their ilk the true enjoyment of Liberty, while they fobbed off the citizens with phantasms'.⁴⁹ The opportunity to do this was not granted—at least not to the magistrates of Utrecht. They had produced a plan for reform intended to placate the opposition, but under pressure from the Utrecht voluntary

⁴⁷ The full title reads 'Verzamelingen van stukken, betrekkelijk tot het zenden eener commissie van hun edele groot-mogende, de heeren staten van Holland en Westvriesland, naar Rotterdam. Tot het onderzoek naar de oorzaken van de aldaar plaatshebbende oneenigheden en het wantrouwen, en tot het beraamen van gepaste middelen ter herstelling der openbare rust' ('A collection of writings regarding the sending of a committee of their most worthy representatives, the gentlemen of the States of Holland and West Friesland, to Rotterdam. In order to investigate the causes of the riots and the distrust that have occurred there and to devise suitable measures for the restoration of public order') (6 vols.; Dordrecht, A. Blussé & Son, Rotterdam, Johannes Ruys and J. Krap, 1784-87).

⁴⁸ On 16 June 1785 the Rotterdam militia was found not guilty by the States of Holland and the Orangists were declared the chief offenders (Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*). The investigations of the committee of the States of Holland were to continue until 24 June 1786 and cost 105,000 guilders. The committee interrogated 328 people (C.V. Lafeber, *Patriotten, Bataven, Fransen en Groot-Nederlanders. Een halve eeuw vaderlandse geschiedenis 1781-1831* (Goirle 1996) 125).

⁴⁹ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*.



15. Assembly of Patriots in Dordrecht on 21 August 1786. Dordrecht Municipal Archives.

corps were forced to accept an alternative scheme for government of a far more democratic nature. In this model, the town council would be elected by the citizens and supervised by a committee of sixteen representatives. After several mass demonstrations in the summer of 1786, it was brought into force.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*. the Utrecht example was followed in Dordrecht in 1787. The *Mengelwerk van het Dordts gedenkboek* put out by the Dordrecht publisher H. de Haas demanded the appointment of a committee of the citizenry to scrutinize and, where appropriate, amend the resolutions of the Oudraad (T.J. de Bruin, *Dordrecht in de patriot-tentijd. De ambtsverdeling en politieke ontwikkelingen in een stad in de jaren 1780-1788* (unpublished thesis University of Leiden 1984) 52).

In March 1786 the representatives of guilds and the civic guard in Dordrecht also ventured into perilous territory when they demanded a 'new free election' for the Forty Good Men. In contravention of the original rules, this body had not been elected by the guilds for years; instead it was dominated by a small group of regent families who routinely filled positions with members of their own faction when they became vacant. Appealing to the ancient charters of 1481 and 1494, the combined assembly of guilds and militia representatives declared the composition of the Forty to be unconstitutional. They called upon the present incumbents to resign their positions voluntarily and make way for new members who would be elected by the guilds. In line with 'modern' eighteenth-century practice, a committee was then appointed, and a fierce exegetic conflict ensued over the precise nature, content and intent of the medieval charters. This debate led to the voluntary resignation of the majority of the Forty. Their principal motive seems to have been fear of unrest erupting among the citizens and a desire to restore relations between the regents and the citizens. The guilds declared that the eleven remaining members of the Forty were stripped of their positions. On 30 August 1786 the guilds and the militia jointly appointed a new council of forty men chosen 'from the womb of the citizenry'.⁵¹

After the elections, Abraham and Pieter Blussé, together with thirty-eight other men of Dordrecht, emerged from this 'womb'. Pieter was an ordinary member but Abraham, as chairman, was the most powerful man in this governing body.⁵² Abraham's position as master of the Guild of Merchants, which had petitioned through its foreman for the dismissal of the Forty, must have been a factor in his appointment. In a letter to the editor of the *Post van den Neder-Rhijn* he tried to clear himself and some of his fellow-petitioners, who were now also members of the newly-elected Forty, of the suspicion of having contrived the whole proceedings in order to take control. It is doubtful, however, that the 'impartial judgment of the nation' Abraham was seeking chimed with the letter-writer's own views. Abraham certainly asserted that his conscience was clear, but his arguments were not always entirely convincing. 'And until now no one among the more than a hundred masters of the guilds, the burghers and the militia, or those who coveted this change, is persuaded that he acted amiss; at least, I have heard nothing of the kind.'

⁵¹ See De Bruin, *Dordrecht in de patriottentijd*, 34-40.

⁵² Van Dalen, *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht*, 188-191. *Herenboekje* 1787, 3.

Pieter's post as a committee member of the free corps, which was after all the armed wing of the Dordrecht burgher movement, must have been a useful leg-up into the Forty.⁵³ However, the Orangist contemporary who in 1784, in a satirical pamphlet about Cornelis de Gijsselaar, described Pieter Blussé—'that zealot of the Dordrecht free corps, a hero of the first order. Attention!'—as a first class interloper and a lackey of the powerful Dordrecht pensionary, would certainly have had other ideas about this promotion.⁵⁴

Although the above pamphlet did not mention De Gijsselaar's name—probably for safety's sake—the eighteenth-century reader would have been under no misapprehensions. Even if the title 'After the discovery of the famous Italian Cornelio Giselarario Servietto' did not set bells ringing and the description still left room for doubt—'a little man; but small as he may be, you can nonetheless see from his face that he is a prime yapper, indeed, upon my soul, he resembles a little tiny pensionary'—the identity of the chief target of the pamphlet would have become clear with the words: 'I observe that you have never seen Dordrecht's keeshond'.⁵⁵ Having launched some spiked barbs at De Gijsselaar⁵⁶ the pamphlet goes on to attack Pieter Blussé, this time by name: 'there you have a man who squints most dangerously, who sits at table ready for a meal and appears to pray for the entire company ... look at the table! look at the food! look at the guests! listen to Blussé's supplications!'⁵⁷ Quite clearly, Pieter's squinting was caused not so much by a physical disability as by his habit of forcing himself into the presence and demanding the attention of the people in power; and the writer continues to embroider on this far from elevating scene:

⁵³ On 19 December 1786 Pieter, together with G. Schotel and H.F. de Court, was nominated by the guild masters to become a member of the College van Goede Lieden van den Agten (Eight Good Men). However, the stadholder selected H.F. de Court (*Mengelwerk van het Dordrechts Gedenkboek Dordrecht 1787*) 44-50). De Court, like Pieter, was a member of the Economic Branch in Dordrecht and De Vrijheid. However, he came from a better family. Following the change of power in 1795 he was appointed sheriff. At a later date, through the marriage of Pieter's oldest son Abraham to Jeanne Petronelle Maizonnet, granddaughter of one of the De Courts, the two families became related. On De Court see also chapter 4. He was one of the people to whom Pieter Blussé dedicated his *Volledige beschrijving van alle ambachten, grafieken en trafieken*.

⁵⁴ *Nieuwe Hollandsche hand-vertooningen gevolgt na de vinding van den beruchten Italiaan Cornelio Giselarario Servietto* (n.p., 1784).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁶ In view of the content, the style and the form, this pamphlet was probably the work of the Rotterdam pamphleteer, Kees Vermijnen (with thanks to Ton Jongenelen for this information).

⁵⁷ *Nieuwe Hollandsche hand-vertooningen*, 9.

Blussé, I must tell you, a short time ago held a sale among booksellers; it is always the custom for the auctioneers of book sales to be invited to a meal on such an occasion, as indeed was the case in this instance.—Blussé is here shown in the act of praying: just look at him praying! observe him always looking in the wrong direction! he looks down towards hell instead of up to heaven! Hear him praying for De G Now the ladies and gentlemen can understand what I mean and I assure you upon my word of honour that Blussé spent a full quarter of an hour taking care of the soul and body of De G... which caused considerable displeasure among his hungry guests and in general led in most cases to no little mockery and derision. It is greatly to be regretted that in these times folly goes so far that men now expose their essential idiocy.⁵⁸

It is always difficult to assess eighteenth-century gossip and backbiting at its true worth, informative as it may be. We shall therefore return later to the question of Pieter's alleged sanctimoniousness and subject it to critical scrutiny. The suggestion that he held De Gijselaar in particularly high regard is certainly corroborated in a number of other sources.

Pieter Blussé and Cornelis de Gijselaar

Pieter's esteem for the prominent Patriot leader Cornelis de Gijselaar was apparently so great that—in order to honour his hero—he managed, by way of an exception, to overcome his aversion to writing poetry.⁵⁹ He does, however, find it expedient to apologize profusely for his halting style:

That I am not a poet, nor of their sons
Any may understand who reads this paltry rhyme
This was not my aim, but just to show
The gladness in my heart
For which I am most grateful.⁶⁰

The two handwritten verses signed '*Ex amore*' (with love) bear witness to the writer's affection, and the handwriting betrays the author. They were probably used to give De Gijselaar a resounding welcome to the city of Dordrecht.⁶¹

The poems were inspired, we are told in the foreword, by the failed attempt by François Mourand 'and his followers' to assassinate De Gijselaar

⁵⁸ Ibid., 9.

⁵⁹ No other poems are known to have been written by Pieter.

⁶⁰ 'Dat ik ben geen poët of een van hunne zonen/ ontwaard een ieder ligt uit dit geringe dicht/ Dit was ook 't oogmerk niet maar enkel om te tonen/ De blijdschap van mijn hart/ Waartoe 'k mij vond verplicht.' GAD, HS, no. 2101.

⁶¹ See the *Mengewerk van het Dordrechtsch Gedenkboek* (1786) 221.

and the burgomaster of Dordrecht, Ocker Gevaerts, when 'they first exercised their right to pass through the so-called Stadholder's gate'. This was a reference to their provocative act on 17 March 1786, when the two men ordered their coachman to drive them through an archway in The Hague that was used solely by the stadholder. Their action was symbolic of course, but for all that no less damaging to the stadholder's image than a defeat on the field of battle. According to Pieter, the riots this sparked off among the Orangists in The Hague actually put the lives of the two Patriots in danger, but one can understand their fury.

The stadholder would have to swallow considerably more humiliations that year, before he finally fled to his family possessions in Germany. 1787 was both the pinnacle of the Patriot revolt and its nadir. In many towns and cities in the Netherlands the militia managed to seize power and used political purges to remove Orangist officials from their posts. In Dordrecht the threat to dismiss regents who would not comply with the wishes of the burghers was enough to persuade the veterans on the city council to adopt more radical views.⁶² On 28 May of that year, urged by the armed corps in Holland, they dismissed William V from his positions of stadholder and admiral-general of the Netherlands. After the same resolution had been passed in most other cities, the stadholder decided it was time to pack his bags.

William's wife, Princess Wilhelmina of Prussia, however, set off in the opposite direction from her husband, not fleeing to the border, but heading without camouflage or concealment for The Hague. She hoped to persuade the Orangist minority in the States of Holland to instruct the prince to 'restore order in the province' and—assisted by the Hague proletariat, always staunch supporters of the House of Orange—to launch a counter-revolution.⁶³ Her spirited attempt got her no further than the small village of Goejanverwellesluis, on the border of the province of Holland, where she was stopped by a group of armed Patriots who briefly held her captive. In the Dutch history books she is inextricably connected with this small village near Gouda—its sole claim to fame. Her arrest was perceived as a great insult by her brother, Frederick William II, King of Prussia, who promptly organized a punitive expedition.

⁶² De Bruin, *Dordrecht in de patriottentijd*, 48–50. Far more extensive: *De Post van den Neder-Rhijn* (1786) no. 478, 81–96. My thanks to Peet Theeuwen for drawing my attention to this double issue.

⁶³ W.A. Knoop, F.C. Meijer, *Goejanverwellesluis. De aanhouding van de prinses van Oranje op 28 juni 1787 door het vrijkorps van Gouda* (Amsterdam 1987) 36–38.

It would, though, be unreasonable to suggest that a small group of Patriots from Gouda who made a faux pas in arresting a royal princess was entirely responsible for the successful Orangist counter-coup of June 1787. The opportunity would not have arisen if France, herself weakened by internal disputes and dissensions, had informed Prussia and England that she would assist the Patriots in Holland. The successful intervention of the polished English diplomat James Harris, working with one of the Orangist leaders, Gijsbert Karel van Hogendorp, to divert Frederick's action and turn it into a counter-revolution, can likewise not be laid at the door of the Gouda militiamen. Added to this, several regents of a Patriotic turn of mind, who saw their positions threatened because of the radicalization of the Patriot movement, proved only too willing to return to William V's banner.

Cornelis de Gijselaar, Pieter's hero, was not one of this latter group; he belonged to the group of 'fatherland-loving' former regents who supported the radicalization movement.⁶⁴ In 1787 it was his portrait that adorned the first page of the Blussés' new series on the chief figures in the Patriotic Movement, 'Netherlandish statesmen, patriots and soldiers, who have distinguished themselves in the cause of Liberty and the Rights of the People', accompanied by a panegyric by Abraham Blussé.⁶⁵ Although the design of this book was simple, as the publishers stressed⁶⁶—after all, 'the Patriot despises all showy display'—the portrait of De Gijselaar was made especially for it.⁶⁷ An investment of this kind only paid off if a considerable number of copies of the book were printed. We also know that the portrait was printed in several price categories, ranging from 20 to 30 stivers, which might suggest that the publisher had a wide target group in mind. Blussé announced that the series would shortly be followed by the stories of other patriotic heroes including 'the stalwart Gevaerts of Dordrecht, Paludanus of Alkmaar, Blok of Leijden, Major General van Rijsel and men of this sort'. By naming those who were members of the central group of 'Patriot

⁶⁴ In the secondary literature on this topic it is assumed that this group sought to attach itself to the burghers primarily for opportunistic reasons. They had to accept the risk that the movement might become too radical, since at that point the support of the burghers was indispensable (Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*; Geyl, *Gechiedenis van de Nederlandse stam* III, 139; Lafeber, *Patriotten, Bataven, Fransen*, 127).

⁶⁵ Published by Blussé in 1792, the book, *Lauwerbladen voor de zonen van de vrijheid* (Laurels for the Sons of Liberty), was dedicated to Cornelis de Gijselaar.

⁶⁶ The portrait was printed on a loose sheet; it came in a blue, inscribed cover (ex. GAD, BFA, inv. 7).

⁶⁷ The engraver was L. Brasser.



16. Cornelis de Gijselaar (1751-1815). Copper engraving commissioned by A. Blussé & Son and made by L. Brasser to a design by P.J. Pfeiffer. Photograph, Iconographic Bureau, The Hague.

regents' Blussé makes it quite clear that he intends to create a portrait gallery of men close to De Gijselaar.⁶⁸

Pieter's close contacts with this faction are confirmed by his position as intermediary in setting up a collection to create and support a National Fund initiated in 1787 by the Patriot regents.⁶⁹ The money that was collected, intended to support both economic and military activities, was also designed as a buffer for the Patriot movement in difficult times. The organization was led by such well-known Patriots as Blok and Gevaerts, both

⁶⁸ See S.R.E. Klein, *Patriots republikenisme: politieke cultuur in Nederland (1766-1787)* (Amsterdam 1995) 244-246.

⁶⁹ 'All citizens and inhabitants of all ranks and faiths, throughout the Fatherland' were called upon to make an annual contribution, depending on income, varying from one guilder to five or more, as they thought fit.

of whom are on the list of those who were to appear in Blussé's portrait gallery. They delegated more practical matters, such as enrollment and collecting contributions, to some of the 'finest fellow citizens', whose names were a guarantee of probity. It would seem that Pieter Blussé, whom Gevaerts appointed to this honourable task, had a solid financial reputation. The tone of the letter Pieter sent to a Dordrecht publication, *Mengelwerk van het Dordts gedenkboek*, in which he drew the attention of his fellow citizens to the initiative and enjoined them to make their donations through him, is not without a certain pride. This episode—which in fact occupied only a brief period—was clearly still fresh in Pieter's memory in 1822. Writing his autobiographical notes, he added a reminder to himself not to forget to mention the National Fund.⁷⁰

Promising as this initiative was, it was destined, like Blussé's planned portrait gallery of Patriot regents, to be nipped in the bud by the political upheaval in the summer of 1787. In this year, after the publication of De Gijsselaar's portrait, the series came to an abrupt end. Instead of the triumphant monument to the future political leaders in a stadholderless Republic that had been envisaged, it remained a solitary memorial to De Gijsselaar at the height of his power, unaware of the deluge to come.

Restoration of the House of Orange

On 13 September 1787, a 20,000-strong Prussian army marched into the Netherlands. Within five days most of the Patriots' towns had been forced to surrender; on 24 September the army besieged Amsterdam, the last bastion of resistance, where the leaders of the Patriot movement had entrenched themselves. The city fell on 10 October. The Blussé family had followed events blow by blow, as we see from the stack of newspapers dating from September and October 1787 that was found in one of the boxes in the family archives, which bears eloquent witness to one Patriot defeat after another.⁷¹ The capitulation of Amsterdam consequently did not come as a bolt from the blue. When the Dordrecht city council received the alarming news of the Prussian invasion on 15 September, they consulted briefly with Amsterdam and then decided on a speedy surrender, which took place on 18 September 1787.⁷²

⁷⁰ The text of the Fatherland proposal and the letter sent by Pieter Blussé may be found in *Mengelwerk van het Dordrechts Gedenkboek* (Dordrecht 1786) 295-303.

⁷¹ GAD, unsorted BFA, box 23.

⁷² Schotel, 'De Dordrechtse schuttersgilden', 30.

From that moment on the local Orangists were the chief movers and they seized the opportunity to molest the Dordrecht free corps. In the Blussé family archives there are two eye-witness accounts by Pieter's friends, Pieter van Beest and Daniel Butin.⁷³ Both were interrogated by the new Orangist city council about the serious disturbances and the ensuing shooting on the day of the capitulation. Clearly, Van Beest was still thoroughly shaken when he made his statement, explaining what had happened to him when he was on his last patrol. He suddenly came face to face with

a great crowd of folk [who] forced their way through the city gate and appeared about to attack us, whereupon Mr Olivier gave the command to turn left and thus marched us along the Rietdyke again, but the mob began to pelt us with stones and ordure and the like and then in great fury seized Mr van Wageningen and Mr Kuypers who were the sergeants in the rear platoon—together with a few others from that platoon—whereupon the command was given to turn right and then to fire, but because we were crushed one against the other and a certain amount of confusion had consequently arisen there was, as far as I could see, considerable firing from all the platoons with the result that some people were killed or wounded, whereupon a deathly silence fell and we re-formed ranks as much as possible and marched towards the St George's parade grounds.

That the tables had turned from one moment to the next was also apparent to Butin when he awoke in the morning and observed 'a greater than usual commotion in the city'. He saw 'many strangers, sailors, and not a few members of the working class, all wearing orange, singing, jeering and cursing excessively'. When the civic guard urged the crowd to make way so that the gentlemen from the town council could pass, Butin heard an 'elderly man' shout, 'not you, you're not the bosses any more, your time's up'.

At seven o'clock on that evening the free corps had their weapons taken from them and it was time for Pieter and Abraham Blussé, together with most of the Forty, to quit the scene. In the years that followed it was the turn of people like Pieter's Orangist competitor, the bookseller Pieter van Braam, to sit on this council.⁷⁴ In commercial terms, too, the Blussé family was hard hit by the change of power. Abraham Blussé lost his lucrative post as collector for the state lottery, while his son was relieved of the office of

⁷³ GAD, unsorted BFA, box 41.

⁷⁴ He became a member of the *Goede Luiden van Agten* (Eight Good Men) in 1787, and in 1793 also became a member of the *Goede Mannen van Veertigen* (Forty Good Men) (Herenboekjes 1787, 1794).

postmaster.⁷⁵ Years later, after the Batavian revolution, when Pieter van Braam had to step down and was deprived of his position as city printer, Pieter Blussé would look back on this period with bitter feelings. He argued that Van Braam should be allowed to retain his position:

I still recall vividly how heavy a blow it is to be deprived of a good position only because of a difference in political thinking; for I imagine that not even my worst enemy could have suspected or accused me of bad faith or improper conduct. As a man of conscience I am bound in this case not to forget the sacred rule *do not do unto others that which you do not wish to happen to you*, and to regard citizen Van Braam in the same way as I wished people had considered me then.⁷⁶

Friends in Exile

Compared with some of their friends, however, the Blussé family emerged from the change of power relatively unscathed. Pieter's much-praised heroes, Cornelis de Gijselaar and Ocker Gevaerts, were forced to flee to Brussels, city of sanctuary for the elite. The commander of the Dordrecht free corps, Gerrit van Olivier, whose orders on the fatal September day had resulted in chaotic scenes and loss of life, sought refuge in Cologne.⁷⁷ These men were condemned to follow events in the Republic from a distance, assisted by letters and visits from Pieter Blussé. Like his father before him, in 1789 Pieter was appointed master of the Guild of Merchants.⁷⁸

A petition submitted to the Dordrecht city council by Pieter and four other guild masters in 1789 makes it plain that he used this position to fight to preserve some of the rights gained during the Patriot period. They objected to the interference of the *Goede Lieden van Achten* (Eight Good Men) in the guild's appointment of treasurers. According to the Eight, a number of procedural errors had made these appointments illegal. Pieter and the other masters adroitly pointed out in their petition that the elections had descended into chaos precisely because of the intervention of the Eight, who had attempted to influence them using some of their straw men. After

⁷⁵ This emerges from Pieter Blussé's autobiographical notes and other sources (GAD, BFA, inv. 10).

⁷⁶ GAD, unsorted BFA, box 51, 26 February 1795.

⁷⁷ A.J. van der Aa, *Biographisch woordenboek der Nederlanden* (21 vols; Haarlem 1852-1878) V, 26.

⁷⁸ This can be seen from his signature on the petition referred to below.

due consideration, the city council ruled that the guild masters had right on their side.⁷⁹

The ageing Abraham Blussé had not been put out to grass altogether either. Although he resigned his membership of the Rotterdam literary society *Studium Scientarium Genitrix*⁸⁰ 'because of advancing years', in 1788 he was still an elder of the Dutch Reformed church in Dordrecht—unlike his son, who did not complete his term of office.⁸¹ For the rest, the Blussé family kept a low profile during those years, watching and waiting and hoping for better times. Or, as Pieter put it in a letter to Cornelis de Gijselaar towards the end of March 1791, in the expectation that the Orangists would one day eat humble pie. Pieter had already observed a few hopeful signs on the stadholder's birthday.

I can inform your honour that many have wholly ceased their joyful songs; that on the 8th of this month [March 1791] a great many flags and bells were left undisturbed; however the society in the hall took pleasure in letting off fireworks, which attracted a considerable crowd, including the lovers of firecrackers; and exceptional in that I could not seek my bed until very late, because even after 12 o'clock the flashes and bangs in my neighbourhood were as great as I can ever remember. Then we are agreed upon this, that all these small incidents are of little significance and the masks will not always conceal the faces.⁸²

Even Pieter's young son Adolph appears to have had to learn patience during the Restoration. In December 1787 this eight-year-old diligently copied out the following passage from the Greek philosopher Pythagoras:

Avoid with our utmost endeavour, and amputate with fire and sword, and by all other means, from the body, sickness; from the soul, ignorance; from the belly, luxury; from a city, sedition; from a family, discord; and from all things, excess.⁸³

In a letter written in 1793, Pieter sums up this exemplary approach in his own words as an attempt to find a middle way between sinking into a depressed state of 'utter emptiness and indifference' and simply being a prey to one's emotions: 'surely that man is happiest who has the heart and the

⁷⁹ J.A. de Chalmot, *Verzameling van plakaten, resolutien en andere authentieke stukken* (50 vols; Campen 1788-1796) XII, 76-82.

⁸⁰ KB, MSS, 78 F 62 no. 3, 3 November 11-1787.

⁸¹ Herenboekjes 1787, 1788.

⁸² ARA III, PA De Gijselaar, inv. 20, 22 March 1791.

⁸³ In an exercise book '*Fait à Dort par A. Blussé en decembre 1787*' (GAD, unsorted BFA, box 42).

good fortune to be placed in such circumstances that he is content with himself and can be a silent observer of all that surrounds him, while the evil that takes place does not distress him too deeply, and the little good that happens does not fill him with inordinate joy.⁸⁴ The letter Pieter wrote De Gijselaar in 1791 also reflects the stoical approach. 'I experience the advantages of my social position and, may I say, of my innocent heart. Content with my lot, and surrounded by my loving spouse and children, I contemplate, in quiet moments, the turmoil of the great of the world, I laugh at their self-delusions, and appreciate both in hours of ease and while at labour—in company and in solitude—delights they do not know nor will ever enjoy.'⁸⁵

His letter then takes on a more obsequious tone, for he immediately follows this outpouring with apologies for his impertinence in placing himself on the same level as his addressee. 'Forgive me this transgression, honoured friend! I rejoiced in the contemplation of your present good fortune; and insensibly, before I knew it, I placed myself, albeit at a fitting distance, by your side.' Pieter undoubtedly had some contact with De Gijselaar but in eighteenth-century terms he was still not of the same social standing. Pieter's genuinely equal relationships were with his true and constant friends, 'my pals Jan and Pieter', who sent their best wishes to De Gijselaar by way of Pieter, and who, like Pieter, replied most regretfully that they could not accept De Gijselaar's invitation to stay with him in Brussels, because they were too busy.

The identity of 'my pal Pieter' is not difficult to deduce. This must have been Pieter van Beest, editor of the short-lived *Post van de Merwede*,⁸⁶ joint founder of the Dordrecht militia⁸⁷ and wine merchant. At a later date Pieter Blussé entered into a partnership with him on behalf of his son Hendrik.⁸⁸ There are several records of this friendship, including a book with a handwritten dedication given as a gift.⁸⁹ More ingenuity is required to track

⁸⁴ ARA III, PA De Gijselaar, inv. 20, 12 November 1793.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 22 March 1791.

⁸⁶ GAD, documents relating to the editor of the *Post van de Merwede* Pieter van Beest (arch. 325), introduction to the inventory.

⁸⁷ See the dedication by G. Paape in his *De geschiedenis der gewapende burgerkorpschen*.

⁸⁸ Pieter wrote this in his letter to Heinemeyer (UBL, LTK 1001, 12 May 1800). A cash book survives from this wine merchant's, dating from 1800. GAD, unsorted BFA, box 61.

⁸⁹ In a copy of *Proeven van kunst en wetenschap* by A.H. Hagendoorn, a book published by Pieter Blussé in 1788, there is a handwritten dedication on the flyleaf reading *Den heer P. van Beest van zijnen vriend P. Blussé* ('To P. van Beest from his friend P. Blussé') (GAD, bib: 116.288).

down 'my pal Jan'. This Jan, so Pieter wrote to De Gijselaar on 12 November 1793, had 'kept his little boy, and is expecting a second child any day; he lives, as far as I can see, in great comfort and contentment; he now has an important business in partnership with his nephew (who is married to his first cousin, the wine merchant's daughter) and brother'. The only person in Dordrecht who fitted this description was Jan Hendrik van Meteren. He has appeared earlier in this chapter, as a spokesman for De Vrijheid. On 31 August 1792 a son, Mattheus, was born to this merchant; apparently the child had fallen ill, but had recovered. Pieter was right when he predicted on 12 November 1793 that the second child would be born 'any day'. Jan Hendrik's wife, Clara Brouwer, gave birth to a daughter, Anna Geertruida, on that very day.⁹⁰ Jan Hendrik ran the firm of Van Meteren & Co., which traded in sugar and syrup, with his brother Dirk Wilhelmus van Meteren and his brother-in-law Christoffel van den Brink.⁹¹ Gerrit Paape dedicated his book *Geschiedenis der gewapende burgercorpsen* (A History of the Armed Citizens Corps) to two members of De Vrijheid, Pieter van Beest and Jan Hendrik van Meteren. Van Meteren, like Pieter Blussé, was a member of both De Vrijheid and the Economic Branch.⁹² In the year he described his friend as 'my pal Jan', Pieter dedicated one of his publications to Jan Hendrik Van Meteren. Not surprisingly, it was a book on sugar refining.⁹³

Adriaan Lamme, likewise a former member of the civic guard and representative of the combined assembly of guilds and militia was another good friend of Pieter's. The two men went on a trip to Düsseldorf and Cologne together. On the way they visited Pieter's son Adolph, who was at boarding school in Krefeld, and also spent 'some invigorating hours with our friends Olivier & Witmond'.⁹⁴ These were Gerrit van Olivier, commander-in-exile of the Dordrecht militia, and the Amsterdam Patriot, Pieter Witmond. The latter had been exiled from the Republic for life in 1793 for his part in overthrowing the Amsterdam regents.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ GAD, DTB.

⁹¹ GAD, ONA, inv. 1311, 16 August 1786; GAD, ONA, inv. 1431, 31 April 1791.

⁹² GAH, Archief van de Oeconomische Tak, inv. 24, no. 4, letter from Pieter Blussé dated 23 May 1778.

⁹³ The book is J.H. Reisigs, *De suikerraffinadeur* (Dordrecht 1793), the eleventh volume in the series *Volledige beschrijving van alle ambachten*, the series published by Pieter. See also chapter 4.

⁹⁴ ARA III, PA De Gijselaar, inv. 20, 12 November 1793.

⁹⁵ P. Loosjes Azn, *Vaderlandsche historie, vervattende de geschiedenissen der Vereenigde Nederlanden ... tot den tegenwoordigen tyd* (48 vols; Amsterdam 1786-1811) XXI, 27, 32.

De Gijsselaar was both a friend of Pieter's and a fellow-revolutionary, but first and foremost he was a customer. And Pieter was a bookseller who gave considerable thought to his business, not one who simply bought and sold the latest publications without a moment's pause; he read the books he sold and he anticipated the needs of his customers.

Your memory is still in top-notch condition, honoured friend! This I easily observed from the list of books you ordered for this year, on which the work in question appears. This, as well as the Charles V, two volumes of the books of edicts, the translation of the OT by Michaëlis & 3 volumes dealing with matters of state and war I have made into one parcel, addressed to you, and sent them by the said barge captain. I added the last ones because they have just come out and contain the report of the Finance Committee &c., trusting in this manner to be of service to you.⁹⁶

The accompanying letter Pieter sent with a parcel to De Gijsselaar on 12 November 1793 shows the same degree of engagement:

I do not doubt that Captain Canters will already have delivered to you the parcel containing the Brief Geography (if this is not the one you meant, feel free to send it back with Canters), Paulus's treatise, which is selling well, and the histories of the Greeks and Romans, which are also a great success.

Pieter is particularly enthusiastic about the *Romeinsche geschiedenissen* (Roman histories) by M. Stuart:

Stuart is exceptionally entertainingly written; I read it with extreme enjoyment and have learnt anew from it that the world, just as in former times, contains an astonishing mishmash of reasonable beings, who never cease to harm, disadvantage or destroy themselves and others.

Pieter emerges from this correspondence as a highly active bookseller, constantly striving to satisfy his clients and provide them with solid information. In this he conforms to the image of the 'better' eighteenth-century bookseller who acted as a source of information for his clients. Pieter's contacts with De Gijsselaar also reflect the improvements in the distribution networks during this period. Evidently, Pieter was able to deliver at short notice the most recent publications—even over a considerable distance and even when they did not come from his own list. For instance, the treatise by Pieter Paulus, *Verhandeling over de vrage In welken zin kunnen de menschen gezegd worden gelyk te zyn?* (An enquiry into the question, in what sense can people be said to be equal?) was brought out by the Haarlem

⁹⁶ ARA III, PA De Gijsselaar, inv. 20, 22 March 1791.

publisher C. Plaat in 1793—the year that Pieter was distributing it. And part 1 of Stuart's *Romeinsche geschiedenissen* rolled off the press of Pieter's Amsterdam rival Johannes Allart in that year too.

In Pieter's view this last order could have been delivered sooner had the notary Van der Werff not delayed passing on De Gijsselaar's message. 'His Honour brought me the commission in person but I was not at home; and it happened that His Honour did not call again until the day after the shipment of the Bayle etcetera to Your Honour.'⁹⁷ It seems that Mrs de Gijsselaar's book order for Michaëlis's translation of the Old Testament in 1791 had also been far from straightforward. Pieter had immediately sent the order to Utrecht, 'but the same not yet having arrived and the bargeman about to set off' he turned to 'a friend, who lent me his copy so that I might meet madam's request. The price is 17-8-'.⁹⁸ It would seem that the delivery of the subsequent volumes of this work caused fewer problems. That same year, Blussé took the series over from the Utrecht publisher Van Paddenburg, employing the fierce Patriot Ysbrand van Hamelsveld as the new translator and editor. The new improved edition is one of the many ideologically sound but at the same time politically 'safe' enterprises which Pieter undertook during the restoration years.⁹⁹

Restoration of the House of Orange

Publisher's Politics

If Pieter really did, as he remarked to De Gijsselaar, reserve his philosophical musings on the 'struggles of the great ones of this world' for his 'idle moments', they could not have been particularly profound. Between 1787 and 1795 he published at least 57 titles, in 81 weighty volumes, contriving to navigate successfully between his Patriot ideals, his need for rest and personal security, and his commercial interests. Now he no longer had the Lottery or the postmastership, he had to ensure that his publishing company and bookshop made enough profit to support his ever-growing brood. Pieter was now 'head of a large family, which will shortly increase once again, and thus obliged to labour in order to maintain their happiness and my independence'.¹⁰⁰ It is therefore far from surprising to learn that the

⁹⁷ Ibid., 12 November 1793.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 22 March 1791.

⁹⁹ See chapter 6.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.. Mentioned in his letter to De Gijsselaar, 12 November 1793.

majority of his publications in these years were books with a low-risk profile.

Among them were the religious works that always sold steadily, like Aegidius Francken's handbook of Christian thought, *Kern der Christelijke leere*, which had its fifteenth reprint in 1789, and Abraham Hellenbroek's simplified introduction to Christianity, *Kort begrip der christelijke religie voor eenvoudigen*, reprinted for the twenty-fourth time around 1790.¹⁰¹ There were several reference books on his list that sold equally well, including the directory of legal professionals, *Naamregister van heeren advocaten, notarissen, procureurs en sollicitateurs*, printed in association with the Amsterdam publisher H. Keijzer in 1790, and J. de Kanter's perpetual almanac, the *Altoosdurende almanach*. School books like his 1791 reprint of John Holtrop's *Uitvoerige Engelsche spraakkonst*, an English grammar, were another reliable source of income.¹⁰²

With his publication of *A new english and dutch dictionary* [sic] in 1789, also by Holtrop, Blussé appeared once again to be playing safe. Although a new dictionary of this sort required greater investment than the reprints or inexpensive handbooks, it met a demand.¹⁰³ At that time there was a growing need to speak and write English, yet there was no good Dutch-English dictionary.¹⁰⁴ The book was probably the brainchild of Willem Holtrop, who partly financed the project. His choice of Blussé as partner was an obvious one given their close contacts in the past and the practical consideration that Willem's father lived in Dordrecht and had collaborated with Blussé on more than one occasion.

Many of Pieter's publications in these years were produced in partnership with other publishers, and this, too, can be seen as a form of investment to minimize risks. A joint project made it possible to spread costs—and thus the risk. Whereas he produced thirteen volumes jointly between 1780 and 1787, in the following eight years the number rose to 24. Pieter collaborated, as we have seen, with Willem Holtrop, as well as with the Rotterdam publishers Jan de Leeuw and Jan Krap, who later moved to Dordrecht, with his former pupil in Amsterdam, Johannes Allart, the bookseller H. Keijzer—also from Amsterdam—and the Middelburg publisher,

¹⁰¹ See chapter 6.

¹⁰² Other examples are the reprint in 1791 of *Kruistriumph* by Hellenbroek and the *Algemeen praktijzjns naamregister*, 1794.

¹⁰³ There is a fuller discussion of this dictionary in chapter 6.

¹⁰⁴ On the teaching of English in Dordrecht see Esseboom, *Onderwysinghe der jeught*, 322–323.

W.A. Keel. He was also involved in a joint venture to translate into Dutch the four-part *Works of Frederick II of Prussia* (the predecessor of the Prussian monarch who invaded the Dutch Republic in 1787). This company was formed by a number of major booksellers from various cities: the Amsterdam publishers J. Yntema, the Erven P. Meijer and G. Warnars, the Dordrecht publisher A. Blussé & Son and the Leiden bookseller L. Herdingh. In 1779 the company took over several successful publications from the list of Tirion—which was, according to the historian Isabella van Eeghen, the last large Dutch company active in the eighteenth century—and went on to enjoy an even greater regional expansion. Besides A. Blussé & Son, members of the company included the Amsterdam publishers P. Schouten, J. de Groot and G. Warnars, the Leiden publishers S. and J. Luchtman, and V. van der Plaats of Harlingen.¹⁰⁵

Many of the works published by the company as well as a considerable number of the works on Pieter's list had already proved to be commercially viable on the lists of others publishers. Of the 81 books published by Blussé in this period, 38 were translations. This was three times the number of translations published in the eight preceding years.

The threat of bankruptcy was ever-present during the restoration period for those publishers who made bad investments—but also for those who attempted to publish works with a radical Patriotic content. Freedom of the press in the Batavian Republic was probably never as extensive as the myth still propagated today would have us believe; and that freedom was even more restricted between 1787 and 1795.¹⁰⁶ This was not to say that the government always succeeded in effectively quashing politically provocative writing. Even during these years of restraint there were publishers who quite simply ignored the injunctions or tried to by-pass them using a false imprint and illegal channels of distribution.¹⁰⁷ This recalcitrant attitude on the part of some of his colleagues did not escape Pieter Blussé's notice. In a letter to De Gijsselaar he observed that anything 'is asserted here, to the very brink of offence ... as will not have escaped your Honour's notice from the municipal precautions as far as the newspapers are concerned—indeed, I would go so far as to say that our journalists report more now than ever they did before'.

¹⁰⁵ This partnership operated from 1779 to 1804. See chapter 6.

¹⁰⁶ Jongenelen, *Van smaat tot erger*, xvi-xvii. Of the 254 bans on books issued in Amsterdam in the period 1747-94 that the author has identified, 74 were issued in the years 1788-94. (*Ibid.*, 58-74).

¹⁰⁷ See Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*.

To go by his list of publications, Pieter Blussé was not one of this group of rebellious publishers. Although they ranged from the orthodox religious to works of a highly enlightened nature, the books he published seldom had a political content. On the few occasions that he ventured into political territory the writings were of a very moderate tone and remained within the boundaries of what was seemly. In 1790, for instance, he embarked on a series of the proceedings of the French National Assembly, titled *Handelingen van de Nationale Vergadering in Frankrijk*, but by offering it without any commentary, and simply as a piece of historical documentation, the series appeared to be neutral and a-political. It was not until 1793, when many Patriots thought that liberation by the French was imminent, that Blussé became more daring; he published a work with a definite political content, the American president John Adams's *Reply to Mr Thomas Paine's work, entitled the Rights of Man*. As the title suggests, this was a very mild variation on the 1791-92 work by the great socialist and republican Thomas Paine, which was banned in the Netherlands. Blussé apparently found it necessary to make it perfectly clear that Adams's work was of a moderate nature. In his foreword to the book he stresses the responsible tone of Adams's pamphlet, in comparison with Paine's more inflammatory and revolutionary ideas, 'which amaze with their boldness'.

Blussé's advertisements for some of his publications in, of all things, an underground newspaper, the *Duinkerksche Courant*, in which booksellers' notices were scarce, could be seen as a cautious signal to his Patriot fellow citizens to continue supporting the 'right side'.¹⁰⁸ In certain of Pieter's other publications, the attentive reader will notice similar signals in the form of mottos or afterwords. At the end of a collection of verse and prose by Baron Frederik von der Trenck translated by Petrus Johannes Kasteleijn, we find a bonus for the reader in the shape of a short discussion of 'the obstacles to happiness under a despotic government'.¹⁰⁹

It is possible that in adding this postscript and placing the advertisements Blussé wished to draw the attention of the radical Patriots among his readership to the fact that they could come to him for a wider selection of literature than was apparent from the official 'above-board' list. His publishing house was, after all, situated in a most favourable location to act as a transit port for banned books. Dordrecht, of all the Netherlandish towns

¹⁰⁸ *Duinkerksche Historische Courant* 27 April 1792 and 12 June 1792.

¹⁰⁹ This four-volume work, translated from the German, appeared in 1789-90. See also chapter 4.

and cities, had the closest connection with the Southern Netherlands and northern France, where in such places as St Omer and Dunkirk all sorts of clandestine work was printed and then smuggled into the Dutch Republic.¹¹⁰ It is more likely, however, that it was not Blussé but his Dordrecht colleagues Jan de Leeuw and Jan Krap who were the link in the illegal distribution network. These publishers, who had fled from Rotterdam to—specifically—Dordrecht, probably for strategic reasons, are known to have been in close contact with the passionate Patriot and hack, Gerrit Paape. After fleeing to Dunkirk he is said to have acted as an agent for several publishers, among whom were Krap and De Leeuw.¹¹¹ Pieter Blussé was also in contact with Paape, whom he knew from the days when he was a representative of the Dordrecht free corps. During the period of restoration of the House of Orange, Blussé published four non-political works by Paape.¹¹² He left the publication of Paape's more provocative works, such as *De Hollandsche wijsgeer in Braband* (The Dutch Sage in Brabant) and *De Hollandsche wijsgeer in Vrankrijk* (The Dutch Sage in France), to his Dordrecht colleagues, De Leeuw and Krap.

The politics of this illustrious publishing duo stand in sharp contrast to those of their eminently worthy fellow Patriot, the upright Pieter Blussé. The books they published were frequently on the knife edge of what was politically acceptable, and so the story of their publishing house provides a fascinating insight into how far publishers could go and what they could get away with during the Dutch restoration. They, unlike Pieter Blussé, had the courage to push the boundaries to their extremes.

The Publishing House of Krap and De Leeuw: A Contrast

When the Rotterdam city council forced Jan Krap and Jan de Leeuw to leave the city after the transfer of power in 1787, De Leeuw, 'that villain', as a pamphlet circulating in Rotterdam had it, 'was well accustomed to running away'.¹¹³ In 1781 he had had to flee Rotterdam and take refuge in The Hague

¹¹⁰ We have little more information concerning the identity of the members behind the scenes and their go-betweens today than the Orange authorities had at the time.

¹¹¹ Gerrit Paape, *Mijne vrolijke wijsgeerte in mijne ballingschap*. P. Altena ed. (Hilversum 1996) [= *Egodocumenten* 11] 32.

¹¹² Paape regarded the books by him that Blussé published in this period (*Samson and Jacob*) as 'books of merit', his best literary products (J. Rosendaal, 'Gerrit Paape in ballingschap', *Documentatieblad van de werkgroep achttiende eeuw* 29 (1997) 61–81, 64). For more on these publications see chapter 6.

¹¹³ H.C. Hazewinkel, 'Rotterdamse boekverkopers uit de patriottentijd' in *Opstellen door vrienden en collega's aangeboden aan Dr. F.K.H. Kossman* (The Hague 1958) 35–58, 57.

because of an incriminating statement about him made by the Rotterdam liquor merchant Hendrik Holtus. He got away just in time, for on 14 March 1782 he was sentenced in his absence to exile and a fine.¹¹⁴ Holtus, arrested for fraud in connection with a consignment of Dutch gin, had tried to save his skin by informing the magistrate about one of his other illegal activities: the storage of some 1,600 copies of a proscribed pamphlet by Van der Capellen, the address *Aan het volk van Nederland*, To the People of the Netherlands. The Rotterdam printer Jacob Bronkhorst had produced the pamphlet, but the mastermind behind the plan was, Holtus insisted, Jan de Leeuw, who had proposed the plan and was the most zealous in carrying it out.¹¹⁵ The precautionary measures taken by the three to prevent discovery—an agreement ‘that in the event of a surprise search, Bronkhorst would throw the printed pages out of one of the windows of his printing house’—unfortunately proved inadequate when one of the conspirators decided to do a deal with the authorities.¹¹⁶ In the end, however, it was not Holtus—‘a man well advanced in years and of considerable corpulence’,¹¹⁷ whose health suffered so much from his long imprisonment that his wife felt moved to address a petition to William V begging for her husband’s release—but Jan de Leeuw who emerged from the affair more or less unscathed. He declared that his job had only been to bind the seditious pamphlets; this being accepted, he returned to Rotterdam and calmly continued to publish subversive writing.¹¹⁸ This proved a considerable thorn in the flesh of the Orangist Rotterdam minister, Reverend Hofstede:

for who would not have supposed that Jan de Leeuw would have been improved by so lenient a sentence and conducted himself as an honest bookseller thereafter? But no, it is [so] far from this that, since that time, he has produced more mocking cartoons and lampoons than ever before, and continues daily in this trade with much success.¹¹⁹

He and his fellow townsman Jan Krap, whose collaboration became increasingly close from 1785 onwards, published such radical periodicals as *Kroegpraatje*¹²⁰ (Tavern Talk) and *De Republikein aan de Maas* (The

¹¹⁴ GAR, *Oud Rechterlijk Archief* (hereafter abbreviated to ORA), inv. 296.

¹¹⁵ GAR, ORA, inv. 296, 26 November 1781.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Statement made by Willem de Monchij (GAR, ORA, inv. 296, 1 April 1782).

¹¹⁸ Hazewinkel, ‘Rotterdamse boekverkopers’, 41.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 57.

¹²⁰ See E.F.M. Sassen, ‘Republikeinse kroegpraatjes aan de Maas’, *Holland* 19 (1987) 268–279.

Republican on the Maas) and several pamphlets whose titles make their radical content abundantly clear. There could be little misunderstanding, for instance, about the revolutionary tenor of *De aristocratie ontmomd* (The Aristocracy Unmasked) (1785) or *De Vrijheid der drukpers* (Freedom of the Press) and *Het waare nut van welingerichte en op eenen duurzamen voet gebragte oeffenscholen* (about the need to train the Netherlands' youth in the handling of weapons) both printed in 1786.¹²¹

By the time they left Rotterdam, Krap was no less notorious than De Leeuw:

And his colleague Van der Krap
Is just such another villainous cur
Who conspired together with him
Those criminal lies were their livelihood.¹²²

If we consider the far more restrained titles of the books on their publishers' lists in their first few years in Dordrecht, where they established their business in 1788, it would seem that they both considered it wiser to keep a low profile, or—more likely—to hide their illicit activities beneath a convincing camouflage. During this period Krap actually managed to work his way up to the post of secretary of the civilizing and highly civilized Dordrecht chapter of the *Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen*, and was able to include prominent Dordrecht citizens such as the Chief Officer of Justice, J. van den Brandeler, among his customers.¹²³ In September 1791, however, the first clouds appeared on the horizon, this time because of the treachery of the Amsterdam bookseller Jan Verlem. When he was pulled in for distributing a satirical biography of Prince William V, Verlem declared that he had obtained the books from the Dordrecht firm of De Leeuw and Krap.¹²⁴ It was another two years before Jan Krap was caught red-handed. Unfortunately, this time he was in possession of one of his most seditious and treasonable publications.¹²⁵

The Utrecht printer, Pieter Muntendam, had probably been under observation by the authorities for a long time. Although he split the parcel of handbills, *Aan de landlieden wegens de onderwaterzetting van de landerijen*, that he had printed for Jan Krap into a number of smaller batches, ad-

¹²¹ KB *Drukkersregister* (Index of Printers).

¹²² Hazewinkel, 'Rotterdamse boekverkopers', 57.

¹²³ See the introduction by P. Altena in: Paape, *Mijne vrolijke wijsgeerte*, 58–59.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹²⁵ The file dealing with the whole case was the basis of the following account (GAD, ORA, inv. 295).

ressed them to various Dordrecht residents in accordance with a list supplied by Krap, and had them taken to the post office separately by different servants, the post office official smelt a rat. He opened one of these packages and discovered a stack of single-sheet bills in which the rural population were summoned to defend themselves in the event of the anticipated invasion by French troops ‘with pitchfork and sharp spade’. They were urged to resist—not the French forces, but their own army, which would attempt to flood the countryside and make it impassable. The writer opened all the stops in the attempt to persuade the farmers to rise up; he argued the amiable intentions of the French and stressed the importance of their own interests:

And would you then, honest farmers! would you, fathers of children for whom you must win the bread from your precious soil and your arduous toil—would you folk permit a FLOOD to destroy your fertile fields ... would you put your wives and children in danger of dying of starvation, because your land yields you no bread!

The content of the handbill, written by Krap himself, was even more subversive than Paape’s satirical biography of Stadholder William V, for which Verlem had been punished.¹²⁶ Publications presenting the stadholder as a figure of fun were common in this period, but a call to sabotage the national defences would be seen as treasonable at any time.

It would appear, however, that the printer Muntendam was unaware of the explosive nature of the bill. When he was arrested in Utrecht and the authorities confronted him with its contents during his interrogation, he admitted that he knew what it contained but did not think it was of great importance. In subsequent questioning he claimed that he had not fully understood the implications because he was in a hurry: ‘the prisoner asserts that he read the proofs in great haste and so did not realize the import’.¹²⁷

Jan Krap—who, despite all his precautions,¹²⁸ was immediately linked to this publication because of Muntendam’s carelessness in putting an invoice into the packet he sent him—decided to play dumb under questioning, which concentrated chiefly on identifying his handwriting. The

¹²⁶ See the introduction by P. Altena in: Paape, *Mijne vrolijke wijsgeerte*, 59.

¹²⁷ And yet in the design of the text (using capital letters and italics for really important points) and in the style (everyday language and short sentences that were easy to read aloud) Jan Krap had taken his readers into account, tailoring the piece for a target group that was not highly literate.

¹²⁸ This included a request to the printer to send the packages ‘without any covering letter’.

order to the printer was unsigned, and Krap could not remember ever having written such a letter. When Krap's amnesia continued throughout five interrogations, Van den Brandeler decided to appoint a committee of handwriting experts. Six schoolteachers were invited to pore over the letter in question, and compare it with other specimens of Krap's handwriting. Despite the incriminating material hastily gathered—and even including a bill in Krap's own hand for deliveries to Chief Officer of Justice van den Brandeler himself,—this committee of inquiry was unable to reach a unanimous decision. They concluded 'that they found it quite impossible to declare satisfactorily, far less to make such a declaration under oath, that the pieces of writing they had examined were or were not the work of one hand'. This was not the hard evidence that the Chief Officer of Justice had hoped for when he set up the committee.

An attempt by the Chief Officer to drag proceedings out for so long that Krap's business would get into difficulties, so that he would succumb to the temptation to speed things up by signing a confession, produced no effect. Krap remained mute. This greatly surprised the Chief Officer, since Krap's incarceration had indeed brought his business to the verge of bankruptcy. As Van den Brandeler wrote to his colleague in Utrecht, he now had sufficient evidence to suggest that Krap knew very well 'that there is no means of obtaining his freedom and that everything has ground to a halt', but he still stubbornly refused to give way. The Dordrecht officer had in mind a desperate scribbled note from Krap's wife, which the prison guard had intercepted, and a somewhat longer letter from Krap's business partner, De Leeuw. Even if, after his wife's message—'everything's come to a standstill, nothing is coming in'—Jan Krap had been in the slightest doubt about the gravity of the situation, the letter from his colleague would certainly have shattered any illusion. Jan de Leeuw described in detail the disastrous downward spiral in which an eighteenth-century bookseller whose credit rating was at issue could find himself:

The circumstances, which grow more distressing by the day, force me to send you this. Your wife and I have so far done all that was possible to keep your business running and this has been more or less possible as long as your credit remained good; but then due to the length of time involved in your case your credit has expired and now people refuse to send any goods unless they are paid on the spot ... and furthermore, we are unable to gain payment from those who owe you money for most of them refuse to pay ... and some of your customers have cancelled further orders from you.

The serious financial problems that overwhelmed the firm of Krap and De Leeuw as a result of Krap's imprisonment are a good illustration of the vulnerability of booksellers in the credit-based economy of the eighteenth century.¹²⁹ The link between trust, solvency and reputation was a fundamental one, particularly for this branch of business, but it is an aspect of the economy of the time that has been virtually ignored by historians.¹³⁰ The commercial practices in the book trade, ranging from exchange in kind (increasingly falling into disuse) to the much more modern method of commission selling, were based on a permanent running account which in favourable circumstances was only settled once a year—and often only once in two or three years. Pieter Blussé's surviving balance sheets give us an impression of the sums that were involved. In 1773, for instance, he was owed 11,124 guilders, 8 stivers and 4 cents over the previous year by colleagues, while for that same year he owed other booksellers the sum of 11,332 guilders and 16 stivers.¹³¹ With such a credit system it was very important to have the goodwill and confidence of colleagues.¹³² Should someone lose this trust—for whatever reason—it was more than likely that they would be caught up in a snowball effect, rolling ever more swiftly towards bankruptcy. They were beleaguered on the one hand by creditors who halted deliveries, demanding payment before they would continue, while on the other they were harassed by debtors who refused to pay what they owed.¹³³ It was crucial in the business world to acquire and maintain a good reputation, not only among one's clients but also among one's colleagues. Seen in this light, the seemingly rather bizarre threat of 'public prostitution' Blussé addressed to one of his debtors—a threat to expose

¹²⁹ The Orangist Rotterdam bookseller Abraham van Batenburg met a similar fate. In 1787 he was fined a large amount of money and given a prison sentence of three months for selling a pro-Orange song; thanks to the Prussian invasion he evaded the prison sentence, but the affair caused him considerable financial difficulties and his reputation was damaged to such an extent that he fell on hard times. When a court usher, charged with visiting various booksellers to enquire whether they had any copies of the *Song of Triumph for the French Nation*, came to his bookshop, he complained, 'I don't get sent anything these days and I have scarcely enough bread to eat. You well know how I fell upon such hard times'; quoted in Hazewinkel, 'Rotterdamse boekverkopers', 39, 53.

¹³⁰ See also chapter 2 and chapter 6.

¹³¹ GAD, unsorted BFA, box 1.

¹³² See also Van Leusen's comments, *Bouwstoffen*, 13, 34-35.

¹³³ Not surprisingly, 'trick' advertisements would be placed in order to ward off creditors and especially potential creditors, by suggesting that the business was still sound (A.J. Hanou and W.R.D. van Oostrum, 'Cornelis Heyligert: Apekees, en het faillissement van een Leidse boekdrukkerij in 1792', *Spektator* 4 (1974-75) 290-295).

him publicly—takes on a much grimmer dimension. Not surprisingly, the man decided to pay his debts after all.

It is equally understandable, from this perspective, that the majority of booksellers were wary of getting involved with the legal authorities. Even when there was no proof that someone was involved in the publication of a contentious work, as in Jan Krap's case, the mere suspicion—particularly in conjunction with an extended period in custody—was sufficient to persuade colleagues to doubt someone's credit. It could have endless repercussions. This factor has so far been largely neglected in studies into the history of censorship. In the Dutch Republic sentences were relatively mild, and there was also the possibility of fleeing from one province to another, so that all in all this has led to an image of the Republic as a Mecca for booksellers and writers. The historiography on this topic overlooks a number of risks.¹³⁴ Compared with the danger of a premature death at the hangman's hands and other unpleasant experiences to which some European governments were wont to subject their printers of banned literature, the sanctions imposed in the Netherlands may not seem unduly severe. This does not mean, however, that Dutch publishers were free to do as they pleased. At the very least, there was the risk that printed matter would be impounded.¹³⁵ And in more serious cases there was the threat of imprisonment of indeterminate length, or else, deprived of a regular income, people had to leave their home towns at a moment's notice.

This is what happened to Jan Krap when, on 17 September 1793, he was freed from 'temporary detention' because after seven months' confinement no conclusive proof of his involvement in sedition could be found.¹³⁶ His relief, however, was short-lived. Because it had not proved possible to charge him using legal measures, political steps were taken on the day of his release. Krap was ordered to leave Dordrecht within a fortnight and never to return.

A mere two years later, however, Jan Krap was again highly visible in the city, congratulating his fellow Dordrecht citizens 'on account of the cross-

¹³⁴ Jongenelen points out in this connection the effect of preventative censorship and gives a number of examples of works that were not formally banned because they had already been intercepted (Jongenelen, *Van smaad tot erger*, v-vi).

¹³⁵ In an age when the major expenses connected with book production were the cost of paper and the wages of the printers, this would be a severe financial setback. Dongelmans calculated that these items accounted for 40 to 50 per cent of the expenses (Dongelmans, *Johannes Immerzeel junior*, 147).

¹³⁶ GAD, ORA, inv. 182.

ing of the river Rhine by the French Republicans'.¹³⁷ This time the French invasion was a success (helped by Dutch farmers who refused to flood their land)¹³⁸ and soon afterwards Jan Krap took his seat on the provisional city council of Dordrecht. With him were such old acquaintances as Pieter Blussé, Pieter van Beest and several other hastily-appointed burghers. He died in October 1797, 'bankrupt' according to a note made by one of Pieter Blussé's sons in the *Dordrechtse Courant* advertisement ledger.

The Batavian Period

Dancing Round the Liberty Tree

The news of the French troops' victorious progress through the Dutch Republic prompted the Patriots in some towns and cities to seize power at the last moment so that they could meet the French on a more equal footing, as supporters rather than defeated opponents. In Dordrecht, however, this proved impossible, due to the presence of a strong contingent of the Stadholder's troops. The Patriots in Dordrecht were only able to show their sympathy once the French had arrived, on 19 January 1795. On 23 January, with the assistance of the citizens, armed in great haste, they stripped the city council of its powers. The peaceful manner in which the takeover proceeded was partly thanks to this small army of Patriots. They carried out 'constant patrols ... which, in a city otherwise without government, wholly prevented any disturbances and unpleasantness which might have arisen.'¹³⁹ But for Pieter Blussé (presumably also one of this group, as a former prominent member of the Patriot Free corps) the city could not be calm and quiet enough. His report of events, appended to one of the rough versions of his autobiography, reveals his liking for authority and his aversion to revolutionary zeal.¹⁴⁰ All unsuspecting, he was seated at table with his 'family and two citoyens' on that 23rd of January, when the company

¹³⁷ J. Az. Krap, *Gelukwensch aan mijne medeburgenen, wegens den overtocht der Fransche Republikeinen over den Rhijn. Uitgesproken in de Societeit tot behoud van vrijheid en gelijkheid te Dordrecht, den 11 september 1795. Het eerste jaar der Bataafsche vrijheid* (Congratulations to my fellow citizens on the occasion of the crossing of the river Rhine by the French Republicans. Speech delivered at the Society for the Preservation of Freedom and Equality in Dordrecht, on 11 September 1795) (Dordrecht 1795).

¹³⁸ Van Dalen, *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht*, 1156.

¹³⁹ Loosjes, *Vaderlandsche historie* XXVIII, 232.

¹⁴⁰ GAD, unsorted BFA, box 51. The quotations that follow in the text are from this source unless otherwise stated.

was disturbed by the unexpected arrival of a messenger from the French general, who informed him that Citizen Blussé had been appointed a member of the interim city council. He was requested to report at the city's main church, the Grote Kerk:

I had to leave immediately—I felt extremely perturbed and it was only on the urging of my family that I was persuaded to go. Trembling, I turned my steps thitherward and attended the inauguration ceremony.

On the way to the Town Hall where the ceremony was due to take place, they paused at the home of former city councillor Van den Santheuvel in order to dismiss him from office, *en passant*. Pieter and several others wanted to have no part in this and 'waited until, after this had taken place, we were summoned to continue'. Pieter's contribution to the ceremony that followed was far more enthusiastic:

Many burghers took part and observed the proceedings, and saw me call the Supreme Being to witness that I was brought there according to the ways of His Providence and in expectation of His assistance intended to strive for the benefit and welfare of the citizenry, albeit with my paltry powers. Then the burghers left the room and we received our instructions, whereupon followed the weightiest burden that burgher shoulders ever had to bear.

It seemed for a short time that part of this burden would involve having to arrest the former regents. The meeting of the newly-appointed councillors was interrupted by a suggestion from 'Citizen R. Roos ... that we must ensure that by sunset on the following day we had arrested certain of the former Regents and I know not what else'. But to Pieter's relief, things were not as bad as that. The regents were deprived of their powers, but not of their personal liberty. Nor were the municipal civil servants subjected to attacks from Patriots. 'I returned to the Orphans' Chamber,¹⁴¹ where I most heartily supported the decision to provisionally retain all civil servants and officials in their positions'. At a later date, when the Dordrecht radicals attempted to call the former regents to account for their actions after all, Pieter vehemently opposed this, believing it to be inspired by vindictiveness. For the time being, however, even without confronting either the former rulers or the radicals out for revenge, there was more than enough work waiting to be done:

¹⁴¹ *Weeskamer*: a department in the municipal government.

And we got down to the work on hand, which demanded our services both by day and by night, indeed, exceeded all our powers of strength and ingenuity. The unexpected billeting of the troops; meeting the extensive needs of a sizeable and ever-changing garrison; (indeed, at one time there were two entire brigades stationed in the city at the same time), ensuring public order and safety for the burghers and their property, and many other things besides; this was the extensive terrain requiring all our efforts.

The problems posed by the compulsory billeting of the French 'liberators' in the city evidently left a deep impression on Pieter. In one of the many boxes of unsorted papers in the Blussé family archive there is a note in his hand: 'NB memo of how I acted in the city council in connection with billeting the troops and was myself concerned in this matter at the Roode Hert'. With a degree of imagination and a certain amount of detective work we may infer from this memo that it was Pieter who initiated the billeting office¹⁴² set up on 28 January, whose members met in the tavern known as the Roode Hert. There was an urgent need to coordinate activities to provide the French troops with a roof over their heads and enough to eat, for on 20 January the people of Dordrecht were overwhelmed by a flood of 20,000 French soldiers.¹⁴³ Some of this number, witness the note in Pieter's autobiography that he was at table on 23 January 'with two citoyens', were even offered hospitality in the Blussé household. That this opportunity for sowing the seeds of inter-cultural contact was not hugely appreciated appears in the same account. Pieter describes how the newly-appointed councillors immediately suggested that they should be relieved of the obligation to open their homes to soldiers, but he pointed out that 'this would make a very bad impression and that we should at least keep those whom we already had to lodge, which I duly did for several days'. The rest of the burghers of Dordrecht, who had not been appointed to the new governing body, were to enjoy the company of the French for a little longer. The billeting office, however, saw to it that 'in future no troops are required to be billeted without having an official signed document'.¹⁴⁴ At the same time a system of billeting was organized whereby the inhabitants of Dordrecht would receive an equal number of soldiers 'so that shortly, when these same billeted troops had departed, this number would be correspondingly reduced'.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Only burghers who were not members of the city council were allowed to join this office.

¹⁴³ Van Dalen, *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht*, 1160.

¹⁴⁴ *Jaarboeken* II, p. 192 (28 January 1795).

¹⁴⁵ *Jaarboeken* II, p. 190.

The number of citizens of Dordrecht invited by the city council at the request of the French army command to share in the celebration of this takeover of power was not subject to a quota. As it did in the other towns of the Dutch Republic, the Liberty Tree planted on 26 January in Dordrecht attracted rich and poor, French soldiers and Dordrecht civilians, to come and dance. Before the dancing could begin, however, there were a number of formalities to be observed.¹⁴⁶ The day began with a Song of Joy performed by a detachment from the garrison, the National Guard and the dragoons, who then marched in procession through the city streets. They were followed by a group of girls, whose white dresses were enlivened by a tricolour sash. Some of Dordrecht's young men were also given an honourable task to perform. Their job was to carry the Liberty Tree in the procession. As a member of the newly-appointed city council, Pieter Blussé marched with the central section of the joyful company; they, like the Dordrecht maidens, sported tricolour sashes.¹⁴⁷ The essence of their municipal function was advertised by a standard-bearer carrying a flag which read 'Appointed by the people, we shall not cease to work for the people's good'. The other worthy citizens of Dordrecht, 'all the people', were also united by a common motto. According to the printed programme they were expected to march in the procession 'bearing in front a banner reading "The Batavian People Regained their Freedom"'. A detachment from the garrison and the National Guard brought up the rear of the procession, which, thanks to the generous planning, left no one over to watch. The closing section of the programme—'the festivities will end with dancing, in which the burghers and the soldiers of the French Republic will join'—seems to have made an indelible impression upon Pieter. The little aide-memoire he jotted down with points that he wished to recall when writing up his autobiography records neither procession nor tricolour sashes, but does mention a suggestion—presumably made by himself—'that there should be a ball', while on another scrap of paper there is the cryptic note 'ball-café'.¹⁴⁸

It seems clear that Pieter Blussé inspired confidence not only in the regents who were pro-Patriot, but in others too. After the official elections to choose a permanent 24-member town council at the end of January, he

¹⁴⁶ This description is based on a handwritten programme of the festivities, presently in the MSS collection of the Dordrecht Municipal Archive (GAD, HS 1242).

¹⁴⁷ The Dordrecht programme differed from that in other towns where the members of the local council did not sport a sash (Loosjes, *Vaderlandsche historie* XXVIII, 235).

¹⁴⁸ GAD, BFA, inv. 10.

was still in place. His involvement with the council did not last long. On 9 March 1795 he attempted to resign his post, attributing his action to 'in part the limitations of my insight, in part the decline in my capacities, but also—and why should an honest heart seek to dissemble or disguise this? caring for a large family; these are the greatest obstacles'.¹⁴⁹ Apparently Pieter was persuaded to stay on for a while, but on 7 April 1795 came his final resignation.¹⁵⁰ Whether the burden of caring for a large family or the limitations of his political insight really were the deciding factors in his decision is open to question. Sifting through the sheaves of unsorted papers in the archives, the scribbled notes of speeches, containing passages crossed out, newly-formulated phrases, emendments and comments for posterity, it is not difficult to detect the fierce and passionate conflicts that led to Pieter's resignation.

Pieter's Contribution to Politics

The change of power in 1795 was immediately followed by a split in the ranks of the Patriot party.¹⁵¹ In Dordrecht, the tensions had already become apparent during the night of the political revolution when, during their march to the town hall, a number of Pieter's fellow burghers and future city councillors had conceived a plan to drag a number of former magistrates into the street. This call for vengeance came largely from a radical faction that was soon to become known as the 'clubbists'. In Dordrecht they had formed themselves into groupings like the 'Club populaire' and the 'Societeit voor behoud van vrijheid en gelijkheid' (Society for the Preservation of Liberty and Equality), which acted as pressure groups. If Pieter and a number of like-minded people had had their way, the countless collective petitions presented by these clubs to the city council would never have been accepted for consideration unless they had clear signatures attached.¹⁵² This more or less anonymous exercise of power could, after all, undermine the still-fragile democracy. Pieter's concern was shared by, among others, a number of French delegates who had witnessed events in their own country, where heads had literally rolled—a spectacle still fresh in their memories.¹⁵³ It would seem, however, that most of the

¹⁴⁹ GAD, unsorted BFA, box 51.

¹⁵⁰ Van Dalen, *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht*, 231.

¹⁵¹ See Loosjes, *Vaderlandsche historie* XXXII, 4-82; Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*.

¹⁵² GAD, unsorted BFA, box 51.

¹⁵³ See Loosjes, *Vaderlandsche historie* XXXII, 22 ff. quoting a letter from the French envoy Alquier warning of the increasing influence and power of the clubs, which threatened to form a state within a state.

Dordrecht town council were less concerned about this aspect. The speeches Pieter wrote out are repeatedly annotated 'requested to retract', written in a different ink.¹⁵⁴ Pieter's request for an honourable mention in the national press for the merchant Nicolaas Roodenburg, who accepted his nomination as inspector of the Dordrecht distilleries but refused to accept the salary attached to the position, met with the same fate. Again, the city council did not support Pieter.¹⁵⁵ The city council had too much use for this salary, which it immediately deposited in the town's coffers, to advertise Roodenburg's magnanimity to the whole country. Pieter's speech, which opened with resounding sentiments—'it is the sign of a mighty revolution that it arrives accompanied by bold deeds, and is followed by noble acts'—ended in a minor key. 'Proposed but not passed', as he noted for posterity. When, towards the end of March, Councillor A.J. Verbeek proposed fining the deposed regents a tenth of their wealth, it was the last straw for Pieter Blussé. He delivered a speech—at least four different versions of which can be found in the family archive—in which he suggested to his fellow councillors that the proposed levies 'conflict with the solemn guarantees of the safety of persons and property made by the French people's representative himself; conflict with the declared principles set out in the speech delivered by President Paulus at the opening of the first gathering of the representatives of the people of Holland, and in the solemn proclamation of the rights of man and citizen'.¹⁵⁶ At this point the city council decided to set up a committee to study Verbeek's proposal. Soon afterwards, the committee recommended that the proposal should be accepted, the only change being that the levy should be assigned to the national government in The Hague. Blussé made one last attempt to turn the tide:

Citizens, you dishonour the revolution—you take a step that you would abominate in Catherine the Great herself—you dig a pit whose depth you have not measured. If you have the right to demand the tenth penny from the deposed regents today, will you not be permitted to require another tenth of them tomorrow, and to demand all their property the day after that? Let us not mince words; once you give free rein to greed, self-interest and vengeance, who will stop it?¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ GAD, unsorted BFA, box 51, letter sent by G. Meuls, P. Blussé and A.B. Stoop dated 10 March 1795: 'Committee members Meuls, Blussé & Stoop appointed to carry out investigation ...'

¹⁵⁵ GAD, unsorted BFA, box 51, speech by Pieter Blussé dated 14 March 1795.

¹⁵⁶ All versions are preserved in GAD, unsorted BFA, box 51.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

This last rhetorical question could not be properly answered until years later. In the event, things did not go downhill as swiftly as Pieter had feared in these early days. It was moderate citizens like Pieter Blussé, not the clubbists, who would in the long run end up holding the reins of power. The Dutch Republic could justly claim a bloodless revolution. But this still lay in the future when Pieter made his emotional appeal to cast aside feelings of revenge, and ended his speech with a pragmatic argument. If his fellow councillors supposed that they would earn the respect of the French by enacting such measures, they were, he predicted, deceiving themselves. 'Far from that, this magnanimous nation is much more likely to say to you; "it is not you, but we, who have dethroned your aristocracy—is this not enough for you? Will you also go on to rob them of all they possess? Do as you wish; nevertheless, the tribute will not be yours, but ours"'. It would be hard to deny Pieter a certain prophetic insight. In Utrecht a similar decision to exact a levy from the deposed regents was immediately revoked once the French announced that they would take charge of the money collected.¹⁵⁸ This later event did not escape Pieter's notice, as is clear from subsequent additions to his writings in which he draws the reader's attention to certain 'noteworthy' developments in Utrecht. In early April 1795, however, he still felt like a voice crying in the wilderness. 'Citizens, I have warned you once more and done my duty before God and my Fatherland. ... Alas! no one listened to me; and two days later I was summoned in a lengthy discourse to retract and renounce my tiresome arguments and protests and apologize; but I swore that I would rather suffer penury than depart in the slightest from my principles'.¹⁵⁹ There is an earlier version of this in which Pieter recounts that he was immediately 'attacked roughly' for his opinions and then two days later citizen Olivier made a 'lengthy proposal suggesting that I withdraw them'. Although the two versions vary slightly, Pieter's determination not to compromise his principles under political pressure is more than clear. This principled attitude is also evidenced by his immediate quitting of the Dordrecht city council on 7 April 1795. Only a first draft of his letter of resignation has survived, and the text is somewhat patchy,

¹⁵⁸ R.E. de Bruin, *Burgers op het kussen. Volkssoevereiniteit en bestuurssamenstelling in de stad Utrecht, 1795-1813* (Zutphen 1986) [= *Stichtse historische reeks* 12] 47.

¹⁵⁹ In the end, a committee was set up to investigate the conduct of the former regents, one of the members being Gerrit Paape. The committee's findings were published regularly in the paper then still being published by Krap and De Leeuw, the *Dordrechtse Courant*. Pieter Blussé does not have a good word to say about this committee. In his view they had cost the country 'a fortune' and achieved nothing but to increase 'the instability, the suspicion and the discontent' (GAD, unsorted BFA, box 51).

but the passages that have been crossed out are particularly revealing. For instance, Pieter explains that, upon consideration, he did not feel 'forced' but 'necessitated' to explain openly that he was no longer able to perform his duties as city councillor and, after thinking the matter over, he wished his fellow councillors 'all good fortune' but no longer 'the assurance of his brotherly companionship'. He had likewise eliminated expressions of fraternity from the closing salutation of his letter.¹⁶⁰

In the years that followed Pieter was to remain politically active. He wrote letters to newspapers, belonged to local assemblies, was a representative for his district in the umbrella organization of which it was a part, and sat on several committees. His involvement in these lower echelons of government sheds light on an aspect of Pieter that must also have benefited him greatly in his work as publisher: his indefatigable industry.

It is typical of Pieter that the night after a district meeting called to discuss the financial problems threatening the local reforms in poor relief, he drew up a proposal that was submitted the following day, in writing.¹⁶¹ Pieter, who was promptly urged to become chairman of the committee 'to deal with the relief of the poor', managed to steer his plan through to acceptance almost unchanged.¹⁶² The ideas formulated in the scheme are characteristic of Pieter's political thinking and his unquenchable optimism during the early years of the Batavian Republic, and are at the same time a good example of the way he used his business instincts for the general good.¹⁶³ He proposed clearing the deficits by issuing a voluntary loan at three per cent interest. He considered beginning with a loan of 40,000 guilders, which could be divided into 160 bonds of which a minimum of four would have to be redeemed annually by ballot. He expected the citizens to subscribe to such a loan with enthusiasm, if only to avoid paying a compulsory tax. He did not think there would be much problem for the church welfare services as far as the mounting debt was concerned. Free from the fear of an obligatory tax, the burghers would reach deep into their pockets to contribute to church collections and in this way, within a year, the church would have earned back its investment and more. Besides, it

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., box 60.

¹⁶¹ GAD, Nieuw stadsarchief 1795-1813, inv. 1, letter from Pieter Blussé dated 12 February 1796.

¹⁶² See the minutes of the Dordrecht assembly, *grondvergadering* 18 February 1796 ff. 75-121 (GAD, Nieuw stadsarchief 1795-1813, inv. 1).

¹⁶³ Pieter's handwritten version of the plan can be found in the family archive (GAD, unsorted BFA, box 60).

would signify a huge lack of confidence in the day-to-day working committee, to assume in advance that the poor relief chest would be in as sorry a state in a year's time as it was now. 'And who does not cherish the hope that with a desirable drop in the prices of basic commodities the former welfare will swiftly return and assist this process?' Apparently, the committee would not entirely relinquish the hope of better times. In the final proposal the amount of the loan was reduced to 20,000 guilders; the remaining 20,000 guilders would have to be gathered by way of the collections that had already been started. Should it turn out that taxes would have to be levied after all, those who held bonds would have their money returned.

Although his aversion to imposed taxes was shared by many Dutch burghers—in 1795 even the National Assembly tried in vain to make up the deficit in the national treasury by issuing voluntary loans¹⁶⁴—Pieter's personal dislike of the concept had its roots much closer to home. At a meeting of the eleventh district on 28 January 1796, two weeks before Pieter's proposal, his father, Abraham Blussé, raised a number of fundamental objections to an enforced tax to benefit the poor.¹⁶⁵ Imposing a tax on only one section of the citizenry—that is to say, those who were better off—conflicted, he argued, with 'sound statesmanship' because it inextricably tangled 'the happiness and misery of the more and less wealthy. ... Were we to bear down on the former (and we know this from experience), gifts to the poor would be grievously diminished, servants would be dismissed and fall into poverty, and no one would employ any person unless he positively cannot manage without, and in this way the industrious worker and the useful artist alike will be forced to become paupers.' An imposed tax, he stressed, ran contrary to the very essence of charity: 'gifts to support the poor should be voluntary, charitable, inconspicuous and unforced'. The solutions that Abraham Blussé proposed were consequently based on traditional forms of charity. Collections should be held for the poor, if needs be announced from pulpits, and steps should be taken to ensure that income and expenses remained in balance. In Abraham's own words, it was wise 'not to spend more money than the charitable donations comprise'. Only when these means had been stretched to their limit should any re-

¹⁶⁴ Compulsory taxation recalled the notorious '25th penning' of 1788 (4 per cent of a person's property) and the 50th penning of 1793 (2 per cent of a person's property). See J.M.F. Fritschy, *De patriotten en de financiën van de Bataafse Republiek. Hollands krediet en de smalle marges voor een nieuw beleid (1795-1801)* (The Hague 1988) 164 ff.

¹⁶⁵ GAD, Nieuw stadsarchief 1795-1813, inv. 1, letter from Abraham Blussé dated 25 January 1796.

maining deficit be made up, possibly through a one-off tax on all but the very poorest.¹⁶⁶

Pieter's proposal was more businesslike. Although he was careful to emphasize his confidence in the generosity of wealthy citizens, he evidently also thought it was necessary to lure them with financial incentives. The contributions he would like to see, in order to assist the poor, are not after all a gift, but a loan with the chance of a 1,000 guilder prize once a year, when lots would be drawn. Pieter's sideline as collector for the national lottery is presumably what prompted this suggestion. But this section of the proposal and the suggestion that the people holding bonds could be bought out if it looked as if there would be an imposed tax, met considerable opposition. What the objections boiled down to were that the risk was too great and the stakes too unpredictable.¹⁶⁷ Pieter's argument in defence of his plan was based on the expectation that 'the reforms already begun by the church poor relief would be continued—that the grain prices would return to the usual market averages—and that blessed peace would cause employment to flourish so that the outlay in poor relief would diminish at the same time as incomes increased'. Whereas Abraham was highly optimistic about the generosity of his community, his son felt the same about economic developments.

The Blussés may have put forward different proposals for solving the current problems, but they both had a conservative outlook. In radical Patriot circles at this time, there were calls for an imposed progressive income tax, and these voices were heard in Dordrecht too. Pieter's colleague, the bookseller Jan Krap, was in favour of taxation according to property

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. Abraham was thinking in terms of a 40th, 30th or 20th tax charged on house rent, from which those who paid an annual rent of less than 52 guilders would be exempted.

¹⁶⁷ One of the committee members, J.H. van Meteren, opposed the proposal because the financial basis for the annual lottery prize was lacking and it was not clear where the money would come from to buy out the bond-holders if a compulsory tax was eventually introduced. The meeting resolved that Mr van Rysoort van Meurs should discuss the matter with the chair, Pieter Blussé. The issue continued to resurface at successive meetings because Pieter rejected this consultation, arguing that the committee had been dissolved once it had made its recommendations. After Pieter van Beest, a former fellow committee member and personal friend of Pieter Blussé's, had made some efforts at mediation and Mr van Meurs had written to all the district assemblies informing them of Pieter's recalcitrance, there at last came an explanation from the former chair. He fell back on a formal argument 'that the designation of a fund for interest and repayments was not actually part of the committee's task'. (GAD, Nieuw stadsarchief 1795-1813, inv. 1, minutes of the *grondvergadering* [smallest district in the electoral system under the Batavian Republic], letter from Pieter Blussé dated 25 March 1796, no. 62; unsorted BFA, box 60, speech by Pieter Blussé 'To the members of the *grondvergadering*', 25 March 1796).

and at the same time on income, but this should only be imposed upon 'wealthier citizens' who had over 1,000 guilders.¹⁶⁸ A proposal along much the same lines was put forward by J.G. Stoop, the only difference being that he would have set the lower limit at 500 guilders, and he suggested that gifts could be deducted from the taxable total.¹⁶⁹ A remarkable aspect of both plans is the great confidence they show in the honesty of their fellow citizens. The payments should be made 'at fixed times and places, in locked chests provided for the purpose, into which each man would put the money according to his conscience'.¹⁷⁰ After the collection the citizens would swear a solemn oath that they had contributed the sum for which they been assessed.

In the committee appointed on 2 March 1796 to draw up standing orders for the city council, Pieter once again felt obliged to come up with proposals.¹⁷¹ Together with three other burghers, one of whom was his colleague Jan Krap, he sat on a sub-committee whose task was to prepare an outline plan. This done, Pieter was able 'before long' to present his three fellow members of the sub-committee with a sixteen-page proposal in which every paragraph was polished down to the finest detail. After a few minor amendments, they approved it and forwarded it to the larger committee. Although large parts of Pieter's proposal were adopted almost wholesale in the final regulation, he appeared to look back on the entire incident with a degree of bitterness. His first five paragraphs, his 'state of the union' declaration, had not survived the main committee. They are there among his personal papers for posterity to read, with a covering note. 'And it was in this final meeting that (even with the support of Crans and Krap from the sub-committee) it was decided to delete my introductory paragraphs 1 to 5, and cunning people's representatives succeeded in glossing their objections such that I had to concede.'

The contested paragraphs are more ideological than practical; they stress that the sovereignty of the people must be guaranteed at all times. It was the people's duty to choose representatives but in return they should also account for themselves regularly (in Pieter's view) to those who had granted them a temporary mandate. It seems astonishing, at first glance,

¹⁶⁸ GAD, Nieuw stadsarchief 1795-1813, inv. 1, letter from Jan Krap dated 14 March 1796.

¹⁶⁹ GAD, Nieuw stadsarchief 1795-1813, inv. 1, no. 57.

¹⁷⁰ Proposal from Jan Krap (GAD, Nieuw stadsarchief 1795-1813, inv. 1, letter from Jan Krap dated 14 March 1796).

¹⁷¹ See notes made on the flyleaf of the draft regulations for the city council of Dordrecht written by Pieter (GAD, unsorted BFA, box 7).

that of all principles it was these that fell by the wayside because at the time there was a strong measure of agreement among Patriots on such matters. It is possible that Pieter's paragraphs were excised because of the way they were formulated—in wording similar to that of the discussion then going on at national level as to whether the principles of the Declaration of the Rights of Man should or should not be explicitly included in the law. Were they to be included, would this not mean that they would cease to be regarded as self-evident? Or was it better to state these basic principles in black and white in order to be certain?¹⁷² Pieter Blussé was not a man of few words. This becomes eminently clear when we examine the passages in the draft of his speech that have been crossed out (presumably at the instigation of the other committee members). Time after time, it is not the essence of his argument but his sententious verbosity that Pieter has to cut. For instance, the committee regarded Pieter's precise specification of educational activities in cultural subjects 'such as, for example, drama and theatricals, the dance and the art of fencing, etcetera' as unnecessarily detailed. All the same, it was probably more than Pieter's tendency to long-windedness that prompted him to set out the principles of sovereignty in his first five paragraphs and led the committee to scrap them. When the committee was appointed in early February 1796 people's minds were occupied with another question, in which the concept of sovereignty was central and to which Pieter Blussé also made a contribution: the conflict concerning the provincial standing orders.¹⁷³

When on 5 February 1796 Pieter Paulus, president of the National Assembly, issued a ruling which abolished the former administrative boundaries—Holland was divided into twenty districts, each with thirty *grondvergaderingen* (sub-districts) which indirectly elected the members of the provincial government—it immediately ran into opposition from the Amsterdam municipal authorities. Seeing their autonomy threatened, they fell back on the principle of sovereignty, arguing that the people had not been consulted on this decision. In Dordrecht, too, feelings ran high. Paulus Bosveld, a clergyman from Dordrecht and representative in the National Assembly, recounted in a letter to his friend Cornelis de Gijsselaar how he had called down wrath upon his head by attempting to defend the

¹⁷² L. de Gou ed., *De staatsregeling van 1798: bronnen voor de totstandkoming* (2 vols.; The Hague 1989-1990) II [=Rijks-geschiedkundige publicatiën. Kleine serie 85] 61, 178.

¹⁷³ See Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*; C.H.E. de Wit, *De Nederlandse Revolutie van de achttiende eeuw 1780-1787. Oligarchie en proletariaat* (Oirschot 1974) 136 ff.

ruling. He identified Pieter Blussé's good friend Pieter van Beest, and three other 'very shrewd fellows' as the chief rabble-rousers. Tempers ran high, and Bosveld found himself in very hot water 'as is natural when one argues with madmen'.¹⁷⁴ One of these 'madmen' was Pieter Blussé, who a year later was to defend his objections to the ruling by drawing up a list of four apparently universal propositions:

- 1) That no one may be summoned, tried or sentenced by any persons other than the legitimate judge
- 2) that no citizen may be taxed or encumbered other than with his consent or if a majority of his fellow-citizens decide to do so
- 3) that his representatives who have been elected undertake to fulfil and observe themselves (and thus not a Committee of persons unknown to the electorate) all parts of the Municipal government
- 4) that those who are elected in this way remain dependent upon the citizens whom they represent; in such a way that the initial right of the mandator shall remain in its entirety, and in such a way that they not only have the right to vote but also to recall and replace them with others; such as corresponds only with the simple and unfeigned concept of a free and independent mandate, Pieter Blussé.¹⁷⁵

In essence, this corresponds to the first few paragraphs that had been deleted from Pieter's draft for the municipal regulations. The only new point is the first proposition concerning municipal jurisdiction and this suggests that the thinking behind Pieter's position on this question was Pieter van Beest's. On 4 February 1796 he had published a pamphlet in which he called upon the citizens of Dordrecht to rise up in opposition to the provincial ruling.¹⁷⁶ Although Van Beest continually hammers home the point that in his view affairs were being handled undemocratically in the way the committee was set up and the proposed ruling was drawn up, the real complaint only emerges on page six of the pamphlet. A provincial government elected by the *grondvergaderingen* would pose a threat to local 'laws, customs and usages'. He goes on to protest that it is unthinkable that citizens of Holland might live to see the day when they could be summoned to appear 'before a different court of law and not in their own city, to answer accusations, be they just or false'. Affairs were being steered towards a situation 'where our greatest Provincial Privilege, namely that no citizen of Holland may be summoned to appear before any judge other than his local judge,

¹⁷⁴ ARA III, PA Cornelis de Gijselaar (3.20.21) inv. 20, letter from Paulus Bosveld dated 13 March 1796.

¹⁷⁵ GAD, unsorted BFA, box 61.

¹⁷⁶ GAD, unsorted BFA, box 59, Pieter van Beest to his fellow-citizens, 4 February 1796.

is abolished'.¹⁷⁷ Pieter van Beest was a federalist through and through. According to a template created by later historians, Van Beest was one of the conservative Patriots who opposed the administrative unification of the Netherlands. The same fate awaited Pieter Blussé, in whose words Van Beest's arguments still echo a year after they were first heard. Blussé had good reason for the vagueness of his statement, which dates from February 1797. At that time it was very much in his interests to tone down his previous polemics. In the spring of 1797 Pieter Blussé was once again prepared to take his place on the city council.

Failed Idealism

On 1 July 1797, Pieter Blussé was nominated as a city councillor; the 292 votes he received out of the total of 1,516 put him towards the bottom of the list.¹⁷⁸ It was not a resounding success but, several burghers having declined the honour, Pieter's votes were sufficient to ensure him a place on the council. He was not, to hold the position for long. Following the seizure of power by the radical wing in January 1798—when the radical party purged not only the National Assembly but also local governing bodies of members with federalist sympathies¹⁷⁹—Pieter Blussé, along with Pieter van Beest and fourteen other fellow-citizens, was removed from the Dordrecht city council.¹⁸⁰ Head held high, Blussé departed, but not before pointing out in his final speech that 'our task [was] weighty, our labour arduous, our personal sacrifice considerable and our reward nothing at all. Nevertheless, until this very day, we have held unwaveringly to our posts, deriving our sole and highest satisfaction from the approval of our fellow citizens and the testimony of an unblemished conscience'.¹⁸¹ From Pieter's concluding words, we surmise that he took the honourable way out: 'Thus we go, with joy, each of his own accord and gratefully, back to our familiar circles; wishing only that they who fill our places may become fortunate instruments for establishing and, may it be so, increasing the prosperity

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ GAD, Nieuw stadsarchief 1795-1813, inv. 3 appendixes: *Opmaking der stemmen voor Raden*. List of names of councillors also found in GAD, unsorted BFA, box 51.

¹⁷⁹ See De Bruin, *Burgers op het kussen*, 59-60.

¹⁸⁰ DC, 17 March 1798. In his *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht* (History of Dordrecht) Van Dalen states inaccurately that after the change of power all the councillors were re-appointed. In fact only five of them—D. Crans, F. van der Linden, Hendrik Weningh, Jan Hordyk and B. de Haan—remained (Van Dalen, *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht*, 235).

¹⁸¹ Van Dalen, *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht*, 235.

and welfare of this worthy community.' We may, however, wonder if he really stepped down from his position on the town council without any sense of resentment or regret. In a letter he wrote the previous year to Cornelis de Gijselaar, he makes no secret of his bitterness at the erosion of former Patriot ideals and philosophies.

Many a time I recall the days of yore when people were open-hearted and generous, when there were pleasant pastimes and conviviality, when men declared their thoughts with simple sincerity—I often seek and recall them, yet find them not, or only among a small circle. Perhaps, I sometimes say to myself, the trouble lies in me, in my advancing years, and that I no longer impart to others my former misgivings? But if I then recall that which in times past I observed among the more elderly, if I see how nowadays people behave who are now in the spring or summer of their lives, then I am compelled to conclude that social enjoyment and pleasure has become very little and that hypocrisy has often usurped the role of honesty, and evasiveness taken the place of frankness, diffidence that of straightforwardness. It is bitter that we must be saddened by this; for no honest philosopher nor virtuous Patriot could ever have foreseen such consequences when they proposed or intended changes and improvements to the state. But they have been deceived in this, that they were least in number—and the mass of mankind gapes at appearances and noise, and thus intriguers and power-hungry politicians won the day and, alas, have spoiled so much. I often see only darkness in that mirror.¹⁸²

Pieter cannot have realized, when he unburdened himself of his feelings about the duplicity and intrigue surrounding him, that he was confiding in the wrong person. In 1797 the former pensionary Cornelis de Gijselaar, tried and tested in the political crucible of the *Ancien Régime* and a born conspirator, was actively deploying his entire network to recover some incriminating papers he had left in the Dordrecht lodgings in The Hague ten years before.¹⁸³ The thought that personal letters and political pamphlets are floating around is never conducive to their owner's peace of mind. For De Gijselaar the situation became acute when a committee was set up to investigate the misconduct of former regents. Having worked his way through a whole series of contacts—among them, as early as October 1787, a Mr Backus, who declared that he would not hesitate for a moment

¹⁸² ARA III, PA De Gijselaar, inv. 20, letter from Pieter Blussé dated 21 March 1797.

¹⁸³ This appears from a dossier that was compiled around 1818 by C. Kneppelhout, De Gijselaar's son-in-law, in which he quotes from several letters to his father-in-law written in 1787–98. See also Backus, 16 October 1787 and 23 October 1787 (ARA III, PA De Gijselaar, inv. 20).

if he could get hold of the papers without anyone knowing about it,¹⁸⁴ and Paulus Bosveld, who in 1795 reassured De Gijsselaar that he had seen the papers in question and replaced them in the cupboard, neatly arranged in order¹⁸⁵—De Gijsselaar finally approached Pieter Blussé and asked him to hunt out the papers—meanwhile apparently transported to Dordrecht—and return them to their rightful owner. Pieter applied himself considerably more diligently to the task than either Backus or Bosveld had done, but with as little success. 'Had I only known two years ago all that you have just confided to me in your kind letter, I would not have left the town council before I had ensured that satisfaction to which you were so rightfully due.'¹⁸⁶ Unfortunately Pieter no longer had access to De Gijsselaar's papers; he did, though, speak of the matter to councillor Crans, who assured him that they 'had been brought here sealed and were being kept here'. He offered to submit an official request in De Gijsselaar's name for the papers to be returned to him. A few months later he, together with his friend Pieter van Beest and François Duffer, sat on a committee to investigate De Gijsselaar's claim for the return of his papers. The committee also considered the possible rehabilitation of the former pensionary. On 18 July 1797 the Dordrecht clergyman J.H. van den Doorslag assured De Gijsselaar that he had every confidence in a satisfactory outcome, if only because of the men on the committee:

I understand that the town council has appointed a committee consisting of councillors Blussé, P. van Beest and F. Duffer to investigate the measures taken against you in the year 1787, what proceedings there have been in this regard ... the two first-mentioned burghers are known to you and *they have not changed*, the third is, if well guided, a good man albeit a little warm-tempered.¹⁸⁷

On 5 December 1797, however, it appeared that events had taken a different turn. This time it is presumably former burgomaster Gevaerts commenting on the vicissitudes of the committee. He had read a letter from De Gijsselaar to Blussé (untraced) with great pleasure and admiration for his political insight. Referring to Blussé, he writes:

And it will have also been a great pleasure for our good, honest, *simple* friend—he is the man who took up the task (for your benefit) with good intentions, and then it was smothered and thwarted in the most courteous

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 16 October 1787

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 22 March 1795.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 21 March 1797.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 18 July 1797.

manner by intriguers who were too cunning for him, and false friends of yours. He understands the map as little as does Van Beest ... such men, well meaning as they are, possess no manual with which to address something of this nature. They have no insight and although they operate in good faith they cannot see beyond the ends of their noses; it was begun neither well nor at the right pace, and had already been altogether bungled by the time I heard of it, otherwise I could have given them a good handbook; they are in the midst of people whom they do not know and whom they cannot compete with, and thus they allow themselves to be wrapped in swaddling bands, with the pins and tapes pulled tight while they yet dream that they are free. ...The rest I will keep until we speak together. They are both good men, and your friends. I have made several discoveries about the case, of which they are and must remain entirely ignorant.¹⁸⁸

The judgment of a contemporary can be far more merciless than that of a historian. Here we are presented with a damning picture of Pieter Blussé: a man of good faith but short-sighted, unable to play the game of politics, surrounded by people for whom he is no match, under the illusion that he has an impact but in fact being outsmarted at every turn. It is hardly surprising that Pieter's government service was short-lived. Even after the coup in July 1798 which brought the moderates back into power he did not return to the city council although a large number of the old guard did, in Dordrecht and elsewhere, among them Blussé's fellow bookseller, Pieter van Braam. The last sign of his political involvement is a scrap of paper on which he jotted down passwords in March 1798 when, as chair of the city council,¹⁸⁹ he had to invent 'signs and responses' for the city gatekeepers.¹⁹⁰ His combinations of concepts, such as 'Batavian-Netherlander' and names of national heroes, like the seventeenth-century statesmen Oldenbarneveld and De Witt, reveal his 'loyalty' to the ideology of the Patriot Republicans, a quality that was closely and self-evidently linked to the concept of 'honour'. In the same way 'brotherhood' should inspire the response 'love', and 'steadfastness' should evoke 'glory'. We see just one aberration: on 1 March he drew a thick black line through his initial choice, which read 'liberty and equality', and substituted the more light-hearted combination of 'freedom' and 'happiness'.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 5 December 1797. Twenty years later De Gijsselaar's papers had apparently still not been returned to their owner. In 1818 De Gijsselaar's son-in-law contacted Pieter Blussé's son in order to ask his help 'in the matter of the papers belonging to my father-in-law, which are residing in Dordrecht' (ARA III, PA De Gijsselaar, inv. 20).

¹⁸⁹ This was a post whose holder changed each month.

¹⁹⁰ GAD, unsorted BFA, box 60.

¹⁹¹ Perhaps he suddenly recalled the title of Betje Wolf's poetic work *Vryheid blyheid* (The Hague 1786).

By 1805 little remained of Pieter's political involvement. In that year he bought himself a feudal title: for a negligible sum he acquired a quarter part of the seigneurial manor of Oud-Alblas—complete with tithing and fishing rights—and in 1808 he took over the entire manor.

Faded Ideals. Risk-free Investment in One's Own Manor

In November 1805 an announcement was printed in the shop run by Adolph Blussé, Pieter's son, advertising the public sale of one quarter part of the manor of Oud-Alblas.¹⁹² The then owners, Martinus Theodorus de Man and his three siblings, had inherited the estate from their uncle. The notary in charge of the sale was Abraham Adrianus van den Oever, but he probably delegated much of the organization to his apprentice, the 17-year-old Jan Jacob Blussé. The man who eventually bought this quarter of an estate was Jan Jacob's father, Pieter Blussé.¹⁹³ He elevated himself to the status of a true gentleman for the sum of 5,125 guilders and 16 stivers—just half what the property had been worth in 1781.¹⁹⁴

What accounts for the low price? It was not only because just part of the estate was up for sale, but almost certainly because of the political developments that had taken place after the 1795 revolution. That was a turning point for the Patriots: now they were able to give concrete shape to their ideals. In the Constitution of 1798 several old laws and institutions were laid to rest: the guilds were abolished, as was the staple right and the rack, and so too were former seigneurial rights. The hereditary right to appoint sheriffs and to administer justice was after all incompatible with the principles of the Patriots. They—and Pieter Blussé along with them—fiercely defended the principle of the sovereignty of the people and democratic representation. When Pieter made his purchase in 1805 he did obtain fishing and tithing rights—these were still recognized—but he was no longer entitled to behave as absolute lord and master over the domain in the Alblasserwaard.

In that same year there were already signs pointing towards a partial restoration of the old order.¹⁹⁵ In an official publication of 9 June 1806

¹⁹² GAD, unsorted BFA, box 9.

¹⁹³ GAD, unsorted BFA, box 10.

¹⁹⁴ A letter from De Man to Pieter Blussé dated 11 July 1809 records that the domain was bought by De Man's uncle Vosmaer at an auction, for the sum of 44,000 guilders (GAD, unsorted BFA, box 10). GAD, unsorted BFA, box 10, The Conditions and Terms of Sale, 5 April 1805.

¹⁹⁵ B.C. de Savornin Lohman, *De bestuursinrichting van gewest, stad en platteland van Utrecht gedurende de Bataafsche Republiek* (Utrecht 1910) 368-69.

seigneurial lords were once more allowed to appoint civil servants. When the other heirs of the Oud-Alblas domain also decided to sell their shares in 1809, change was once more in the air. On 22 April 1809 King Louis Bonaparte signed a law that revoked the abolition of the nobility in the Netherlands. Not only were the former nobles recognized once again, but the new law also made it possible to create new nobility.¹⁹⁶ The former owner of the quarter of the domains which Pieter had bought, Martinus Theodorus de Man, now acting as notary and in charge of the affairs of his brothers and sisters, perceived a golden opportunity to rid himself of the whole estate for an attractive price. To do this, though, it was necessary to persuade Pieter Blussé to put his quarter up for auction along with the rest of the property.

De Man wrote Pieter a letter explaining his position and proposing that they auction the manor jointly 'for which, it seems to us, the time is now ripe, and since the nobility is now about to be reinstated there are many people who wish to acquire a noble title and see the purchase of a manor as a suitable opportunity to do so'.¹⁹⁷ He received an immediate reply from Pieter Blussé, explaining why he bought his share in 1805. 'I did so partly with a view to assisting one of my sons who was then entering legal practice and is now a qualified notary, and therefore I did not accept an offer of 1,000 guilders profit that was made to me straight away. And for the same reason I should not now be happy to accept your proposal unless we could agree beforehand regarding an appropriate token for me, and that should the sale take place here, it will be conducted by my son.'¹⁹⁸ Martinus, as his reply reveals, was not the man to misunderstand the hints in Pieter's letter. If Pieter wished to give his son another opportunity to organize the sale of a manor, he would have no objections. Martinus was even willing to shoulder the costs of the auction, should the sale not go through because the final bid was too low. Martinus made it quite clear, however, that if Pieter meant by his mention of 'an appropriate token' that he wanted a sum of money in return for agreeing to the sale, this was out of the question. Finally, he stated that the auction would only go ahead if Pieter agreed to take part in it. If not, he and his siblings would retain their three-quarter share, but in that case it would be important 'to consult together how best to gain payment by legal means from the bailiff C.A. Pijl, and others who

¹⁹⁶ *De Hoge Raad van de Adel, geschiedenis en werkzaamheden*, 8 (The court of nobility).

¹⁹⁷ GAD, unsorted BFA, box 10, letter dated 8 June 1809.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 10 June 1809.

owe us various sums, and to ensure that in future said payments are made at the proper times.'¹⁹⁹ De Man was warning Pieter of the disadvantages inherent in the ownership of a manor at a time when the claims of the present proprietors were no longer secure. The bailiff of Oud-Alblas, Mr Pijl, had neglected to pay his dues to the owners for the past three years.

This time Pieter did not reply by return of post. A bout of influenza gave him time for reflection. Two weeks later, the fever having abated, De Man's message had clearly sunk in. Pieter expressed himself content with De Man's 'readiness' to let his son hold the auction and to bear the costs should the sale not go through. He had decided to give up the idea previously suggested in his letter,²⁰⁰ and he agreed that they should take measures against Mr Pijl. In the months that followed there was a steady correspondence between Amsterdam and Dordrecht about what possible steps could be taken against Pijl—before or after the auction—and this delayed the preparations for the sale.²⁰¹ On 10 November 1809 De Man informed Pieter Blussé that he had decided not to go on hoping for an agreement with the bailiff 'who is stealing from us in an infamous manner' and that he intended to institute legal proceedings to expose his wrongdoings in public. This would render superfluous Pieter's suggestion to dismiss Pijl from his post as bailiff, which because of the 'most recent blessed revolution' was now something that had to be done by the national government and not by the lord of the manor:

Since it is surely not likely that someone who has misappropriated and misused moneys entrusted to him in his official capacity should have the effrontery to continue in his post as bailiff after he has been charged with such, I should be particularly pleased to see Mr J.J. Blussé appointed bailiff in our manor.

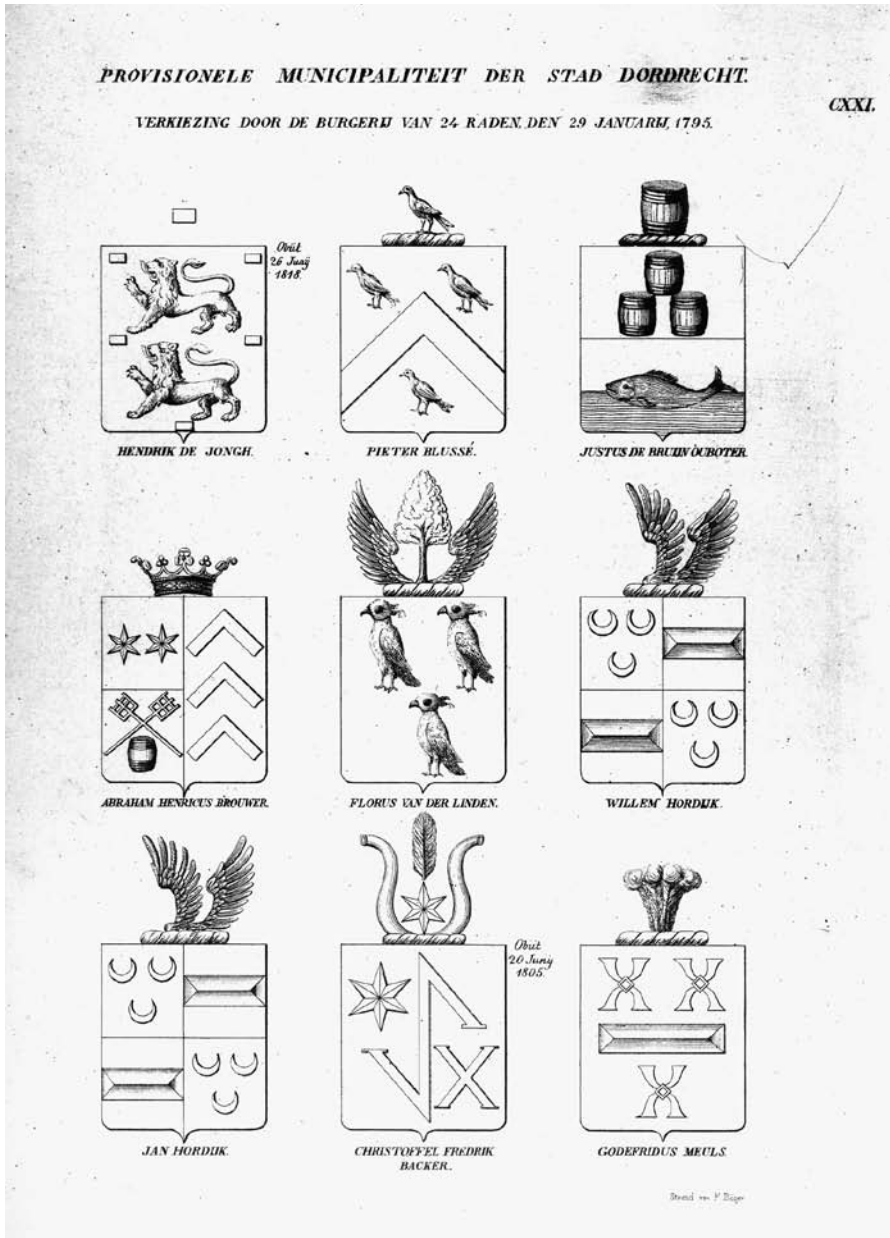
De Man felt, however, that it would be wiser to delay Jan Jacob Blussé's appointment as bailiff until after the sale, because the value of the property would be higher if the prospective buyer were to be given the option either 'to request the position himself, or to recommend another person of whom he approved'.

As we shall see, De Man had made a strategic miscalculation. In the Blussé archive there are two identical lists of conditions of sale printed by A. Blussé & Son. Handwritten corrections, however, mean that they now

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 20 June 1809.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 1 July 1809.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 11 July 1809, 15 July 1809, 6 September 1809, 10 November 1809.



17. Page from a deluxe volume compiled by F.C. de Court and published in 1846 by Blussé & Van Braam. Portrayed here are the coats of arms of members of the provisional government of Dordrecht (including Pieter Blussé) after the Batavian Revolution of 1795. Dordrecht Municipal Archives.

differ on a number of crucial points. The first announces sale of the whole of the manor of Oud-Alblas on 15 December 1809. On the second the date has been changed to 11 May 1810 and the name of Pieter Blussé as one of the four sellers has been removed.²⁰² We may surmise what happened. On 4 June 1810 notary Jan Jacob Blussé added the finishing touches to the contract of sale for three-quarters of the manor of Oud-Alblas, which, partly because it was divided, was sold for 7,025 guilders—far less than the minimum price De Man had stipulated. The buyer? Pieter Blussé.²⁰³

If the new owner acquired the entire estate with an eye to moving up into the aristocracy, these hopes were swiftly dashed. Less than a month after the sale, the then king of the Netherlands, Louis Bonaparte, was recalled to Paris by his brother, the Emperor Napoleon. Louis's plans to restore the Dutch nobility came to nothing and the kingdom of the Netherlands was annexed.²⁰⁴ The possible appointment as bailiff of Pieter's son Jan Jacob, later replaced as a candidate by his brother Adolph, remained unresolved. But here, too, it appears that Pieter had miscalculated. True, as the owner of the title, he had considerable influence on the appointment to particular local posts, but the final say lay with the national government—and they did not wish to appoint a bailiff from outside the area of Alblasserwaard. A letter dated 4 January 1815 and addressed to Pieter Blussé, in which Mr C.A. Pijl applied for the post with the utmost humility, will certainly not have been the first to point out that Pieter's son, who lived in Dordrecht, had not the slightest chance of gaining the appointment.²⁰⁵ Jan Drinkwaard, president of the council of Oud-Alblas, was also well aware of this complication, as appears from a letter he had written some six months previously to the new Dutch king, William I, putting himself forward as a candidate for the position of bailiff and secretary of Oud-Alblas 'since he is a resident of said district and the largest landowner there'.²⁰⁶ Both Drinkwaard and Pijl considered that they had proved their merit—Pijl because, in his own words, he had 'never once opposed the seignorial prerogatives since the year 1795, but indeed on the contrary during those years when most men were fearful of showing support for lords, had stood firm'.

²⁰² GAD, unsorted BFA, box 10.

²⁰³ Ibid., *Memorie voor de heer Pieter Blussé, wegens de koop van drie vierde der Ambagtsheerlijkheid van Oud Alblas*.

²⁰⁴ G.P. Nijkamp and O. Schutte eds., *De Nederlandse adel, besluiten en wapenbeschrijvingen* (The Dutch nobility, coats of arms, etc.) (The Hague 1989) 8.

²⁰⁵ GAD, unsorted BFA, box 9, 7 January 1814. At a later date Pieter corrected the year to '1815'.

²⁰⁶ GAD, unsorted BFA, box 9, petition from Jan Drinkwaard, 31 September 1814.

Drinkwaard, in turn, felt justified in applying for the post because of the many indignities he had suffered at the hands of the previous regime. And he added that he would 'presently gladly take advantage of the benefits that under the rule of Your Royal Highness may be expected of the post of bailiff and secretary'.

In 1814 the situation in the Netherlands had changed again: Napoleon had been defeated and the House of Orange had been restored. Under King William I a number of seigneurial privileges were reinstated. The possibility of elevation to the peerage was also opened up again. It would seem, judging from a number of letters Pieter Blussé (now Pieter Blussé of Oud-Alblas) wrote to the *Hoge Raad van de adel* or Court of Nobility, in which he repeatedly emphasized the seniority and value of the manor he had acquired, that he was attempting to acquire a title.²⁰⁷ Apparently, he needed to explain why the purchase price had been so low. According to Pieter, this was chiefly the result of the 'unfavourable circumstances of the times; of which the present owner has borne and in part still bears all the real disadvantages and the uncertainty of the outcomes encumbering his purchase, always in the hope of a commensurate benefit in the end, in accordance with the true value of the manor, which prospect seems likely to be achieved'.²⁰⁸ However, unlike some fellow Dordrecht citizens, the Blussé family was not among the 280 Netherlandish families who were elevated to the aristocracy after 1814.²⁰⁹

Disregarding for the moment his political ambivalence, in 1814, even without a title, Pieter Blussé had good reason to look back upon his life with considerable pride. In 1771, when he complained to his betrothed that he had to burn the midnight oil keeping watch at night when he would far rather have been with her, he could hardly have imagined that in 1798 he would be in a position, as chairman of the local council, to coin the watchwords for this very midnight guard. Equally unlikely was the prospect that this son of a middle-class bookseller, then embroiled in conflict with Sophia's guardians because of the difference in status between him and his future wife, would one day be called the Lord of Oud-Alblas.

Nor, presumably, would Pieter have felt discontented with his political shifts of opinion. Such a sense of unease is rather the lot of the historian,

²⁰⁷ A dossier concerning this can be found in GAD, unsorted BFA, box 9.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., in a letter from Pieter Blussé, lacking the name of the addressee, dated 19 October 1818.

²⁰⁹ G.P. Nijkamp and O. Schutte eds., *De Nederlandse adel, besluiten en wapenbeschrijvingen* ('s Gravenhage 1989)

whose task is to introduce a structure within which information can be presented in a logically coherent manner. Any such structure is of no use whatsoever for the closing years of the eighteenth century. This was a time of confused political rhetoric, when the terminology had not yet gelled and political attitudes had not yet been framed as coherent social visions.²¹⁰ Historians have generally had to interpret this period as best they could, using an ideological spectrum covering the conservative to the radical, or federalists by way of unitarian moderates to democrats.²¹¹ The latter were regarded as the most reforming, revolutionary party in the political arena.

Like most eighteenth-century men, however, Pieter Blussé cannot be labelled with any of these tags. At the start of the Batavian Republic in 1796, he appeared to align himself with the federalists when he opposed the new provincial standing order. His reasoning, however, was ultra-democratic: he argued that the order had not been created in a democratic manner but had been imposed by a central authority without consulting the electorate. Pieter's views on taxation—compulsory or voluntary—can be more easily placed in the available framework. In his rejection of compulsory taxation his attitude was uncompromisingly conservative. Nowadays we would describe views like his as liberal, but the term had yet to be coined. Pieter's desire for open government, as evidenced by his proposal that he should have lists of all the municipal public offices with their respective salaries printed and distributed, at his own expense, can only be interpreted as reformist.²¹² His dislike of the censorship of the mail by the radical *Comité van Waakzaamheid*—there is a file on the subject in his personal archives²¹³—testifies to his strong attachment to the democratic ideals of the Patriots in the 1780s. Such ideals, because they harked back to historic rights, were conservative and modern at the same time. So far, Pieter's apparently ambivalent attitudes do not suggest a tendency to change political allegiance. They slot easily into the many-faceted categories that characterize the early period of the Batavian Republic.

²¹⁰ Cp. W. Velema, '1795 en de geschiedenis van het Nederlands republikanisme', *Documentatieblad van de werkgroep 18e eeuw* 28 (1996) 29–38.

²¹¹ For the clearest example of this see C.H.E. de Wit, *De strijd tussen aristocratie en democratie* (Heerlen 1965), and S. Stuurman, *Wacht op onze daden. Het liberalisme en de vernieuwing van de Nederlandse staat* (Amsterdam 1992).

²¹² See a note made by Pieter Blussé, 23 April 1795 (GAD, unsorted BFA, box 15).

²¹³ Pieter Blussé kept a file containing several examples of the criticism which he had had to put up with from this committee in his office of postmaster in charge of Amsterdam letters. (GAD, BFA, box 51).

The purchase of a manor, however, has to be viewed in a different light. Here Pieter crossed into the realm of the eighteenth-century gentleman. Owning a manor with hereditary privileges and judicial powers was at odds with all Pieter's past ideals as a member of the Patriotic free corps and as a councillor during the Batavian spring. Even his 'conservative' opposition to compulsory taxation takes on a somewhat bizarre tint in the light of his later concern to collect his dues from tithing, fishing rights, a tax on milling and all the other income he was entitled to as lord of the manor. A mitigating circumstance is that by this time we have moved out of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth. If the numerous requests for elevation to the aristocracy King William received from former Patriots are any guide, Pieter was certainly far from the only one to regret his past policies and loyalties.²¹⁴ All the same, the letters from Pijl, the former bailiff of Oud Alblas, and Drinkwaard, president of the council of Oud-Alblas, in which they stressed the courage they had shown in continuing to support a universally despised system of seigneurial rights, makes the extent of Pieter's volte-face in welcoming such professions of support painfully clear.

This leaves us with the question as to what drove Pieter to purchase a feudal title. One motive might have been frustration; true, he was allowed to play the political game but, when it really came down to it, men like Cornelis de Gijsselaar and Ocker Gevaerts dismissed him as a lightweight, someone who could not read the map. His desire to establish his son in a lucrative post must also have been a factor. And, of course, his commercial interests in this purchase should not be underestimated. The abolition of certain feudal privileges and the uncertainty about the future of seigneurial rights caused the value of such estates to slump during this period and it became possible to buy titles at a fraction of their former value in the hope of better times. Some of the rights, including the collection of tithes, remained, so the investment was not that great a risk.²¹⁵ A balance sheet for the year 1812 reveals that the estate yielded annual interest of roughly two and a half per cent—not much less than Pieter received from the houses he rented out.²¹⁶ And, it later transpired, it was a far safer form of

²¹⁴ See Nijkamp, *De Nederlandse adel*.

²¹⁵ A.S. de Blécourt, *Kort begrip van het oud-Vaderlands burgerlijk recht* (6th print; Groningen 1950) 236–238.

²¹⁶ 'Baten en lasten der heerlijkheid van Oud Alblas', GAD, unsorted BFA, box 9. Blussé's income from the houses he owned is listed in several notebooks recording his 'revenues', in the boxes numbered 7, 59, 60 and 64.

investment than buying state bonds.²¹⁷ When Pieter saw an announcement regarding the sale of Oud-Alblas in his own newspaper, he spotted a chance to kill several birds with one stone: he could improve his social status, acquire a post for his son and make a not too risky investment with 'the hope of a commensurate benefit in the end' as a bonus. We will encounter these mixed motives again as we explore Pieter's profile as a publisher.

The Politics of Publishing after the Batavian Revolution

The Batavian period seems at first glance to have had little impact on the Blussés' list. Many of their publications during this period are simply continuations of projects that had been started earlier. There are, for instance, six volumes of Michaëlis's Enlightenment-influenced translation of the Bible, in a Dutch translation by Y. van Hamelsveld, three new volumes of the work begun in 1788, *Volledige beschrijving van alle konsten* (Complete description of all the arts, trades ...) as well as volume 19 of a standard work on geography taken over from Tirion, titled *Tegenwoordige staat der vereenigde Nederlanden* (The Present State of the United Netherlands).²¹⁸ Even safer was Blussé's investment in the fifth edition of a church handbook, *Kerkelyk handboekje*, and the 24th edition of Hellenbroek's introduction to the Christian religion for the common man, *Kort begrip der Christelyke religie voor eenvoudigen*: according to an advertisement published in 1806, at least 50,000 copies of this book had been sold.²¹⁹ In 1798 Blussé began reissuing the complete works of Buffon; this was a major investment. Buying the copyright, the copper plates and the remaining copies cost 13,600 guilders. This project grew out of an initiative begun before 1795.²²⁰ Pieter also published new titles reflecting the interests his clients had shown in previous publications of his, such as the translation of a study of the history of dogs, wild and domesticated, *Natuur- en huishoudkundige historie van honden*, J.J. Plenck's *Natuur- en scheikundige verhandeling over de vochten des menschlijken ligchaams*, a book discussing in scientific detail

²¹⁷ In 1810 Napoleon decided to reduce the Netherlands' national debt by two-thirds. This meant that those holding state bonds only received one third of the interest.

²¹⁸ Pieter Blussé was one of a large group who bought several titles from Tirion's list. See chapter 6.

²¹⁹ DC, 21 August 1806.

²²⁰ On 21 June 1791, for the considerable sum of 13,600 guilders, Pieter Blussé bought the copyright and the copper printing plates of Buffon's 17-volume *Histoire naturelle* from the Amsterdam publisher, Schneider. The price included the unsold copies of this title—in French and Dutch—and 850 volumes of Buffon's *Histoire des oiseaux*. The contract may be found in GAD, unsorted BFA, box 51. See also chapter 6.

the fluids in the human body, and a biography of a count, *Nicolaas Lodewijk, graaf en heer van Zinzendorf en Pottendorf*.

New trends can nevertheless be found in the Blussé list—titles that reflect the tumultuous political events of those years. The rationale behind an investment in French textbooks for beginners, for instance, is quite obvious in a period when it was not only political language that was confusing.²²¹ The same is true of the handbooks, such as the *Constitutioneel woordenboek, De Bataafsche republiek verdeeld in departementen* and the *Lijst van tolrechten der Fransche Republiek*, which Blussé published in 1800. Armed with these practical reference works, Dutch citizens could get their bearings in a society that was changing at dizzying speed and was confronted with an entirely new legal system—including the first constitution—redefined provincial borders, new government agencies and new levies on imports. Another book published in 1795 by Blussé and titled *De waare belangens van Frankrijk met betrekking tot de 7 Vereenigde Nederlanden* (The true importance of France with respect to the Seven United Provinces) must have met a demand for up-to-date information. At least as essential was the book published in the same year, *Artikelen vastgesteld tusschen den vertegenwoordiger van het Fransche volk Richard en een aantal vertegenwoordigers van het Nederlandse volk* (Agreements made between the representative of the French people, Richard, and a number of representatives of the people of the Netherlands). In a period of such chaotic change people felt menaced by unseen threats and ‘Conspiracies against all Religions and Forms of Government in Europe most grievously conceived in the secret gatherings of the Illuminists, Freemasons and Reading Societies’. The English writer J. Robison helpfully raked up some evidence and in 1799 Blussé published a Dutch translation. In that year it did not require a fifth column to arouse alarm and despondency in the Batavian Republic when out of the blue British forces invaded the country at Kamperduin and captured part of the province of North Holland. The Amsterdam publisher Maaskamp brought out a print illustrating the attack within two months of the invasion. Not a moment too soon, for shortly after that the British were driven out again, an event recorded in a print by Blussé showing the retreat of the British and Russian armies from the shores of North Holland.

²²¹ J. van Alphen, *Het vertalen en leeren der Fransche taal gemakkelijk een aangenaam gemaakt*, 3 vols. (Dordrecht 1796); J. van Bemmelen, *Korte en gemakkelijke wijze om de Fransche taal te leeren* (Dordrecht 1798).

It was not until the Peace of Amiens was signed in 1802 that the Dutch people could breathe freely again, and it fell to Matthijs Siegenbeek, the first professor of Dutch Language and Literature to be appointed at the University of Leiden, to express this sigh of relief in a Latin oration. Pieter Blussé felt that a larger section of the Dutch population should be able to share in this and had the address translated and published in Dutch. By then, the French Revolution belonged to a distant past; but the rest of Europe had not yet recovered from it. This explains why in the space of three years, from 1801 to 1803, Blussé & Son published three translations of contemporary French history dealing with this very period: A. Barruel's five-part *Gedenkschriften om te dienen tot de geschiedenis der Jacobijnen*, M. de La Tocnaye's *De oorzaken der Fransche omwenteling* and F.B. de Bercenay's *Vertrouwde briefwisseling van Lodewijk den XVI ... gedurende de laatste jaaren zijner regeering, en tot aan zijn dood*. The revolutionary ardour had meanwhile been quenched. The disgruntled comments of Baron de la Tocnaye, who continually stressed his concern about the anarchic tendencies in the revolutionary army, scarcely suggest great confidence in the future revolutionary ideal state.²²² In the work by Barruel, as also in Blussé's publication *Samenzweringen tegen alle godsdiensten en regeeringsvormen* (conspiracies against all religions and forms of government), the revolution is presented as a plot against the unity of church and state and thus as a subject of deep distrust.²²³ We might infer that Pieter Blussé also had second thoughts about the separation of church and state—as established in the first Netherlands' constitution of 1798—from three anonymous pamphlets published in that year: *Schets van den tegenwoordigen staat der Hervormde kerk in Nederland; benevens ontwerp ter oprichting van een genootschap, tot instandhouding van dezelve*, (A Sketch of the Present State of the Dutch Reformed Church ...), *Gewigtig voorstel aan mijne christelijke landgenooten, strekkende ter opwekking van de verschillende Christengezindheden in ons Vaderland, om er gezamenlijk bij de Nationale Vergadering op aan te dringen, dat men in het aanstaand Ontwerp van Constitutie aan den Christelijken godsdienst openlijk hulde doe ...* (Important Proposal to my Christian Fellow Countrymen ...), and *Iets over de aanstaande bezoldiging der predikanten in de Hervormde Gemeenten der Bataafsche*

²²² M. Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution* (Cambridge Mass. 1988).

²²³ B. van der Hertten, 'De Franse revolutie: een satanisch complot aan de vooravond van het einde der wereld', *De achttiende eeuw* 28 (1996) 7-17, 1-2, 11.

Republiek (Thoughts Concerning Proposals for the Payment of Ministers in the Reformed Church of the Batavian Republic).

Generally speaking, Pieter Blussé played it safe, with a list of publications that was in part timeless, the more expensive books, and in part geared to topical issues, usually cheaper editions or translations—works that had already proved themselves in other countries. But his list was not so politically weighted that he would spend money printing works of a controversial nature, not even to promote his own ideas—ideas that sometimes conflicted with the views of the majority of his fellow councillors—in the 1795 to 1798 period. Although we cannot be sure that he did not surreptitiously encourage such ideas, possibly promoting them in anonymous works, it would seem that on the whole Pieter made every effort not to get his fingers burnt dealing with pressing topics. The ledgers for the printing house he took over in 1797, which specify all his typesetting and seldom contain anything surprising, suggest the caution of his approach.²²⁴ We find only one piece that was published anonymously and can be attributed to the bookseller whose name appears at the top of the stock list: Blussé. It gave advice on how to vote and was titled *Wat moet de Bataafsche burger in de grondvergaderingen verrichten, die tegen den 10 julij 1798 zijn opgeroepen? hoe vordert zijn belang, dat hij handelen zal?* (How should the Batavian burgher act in the sub-committees summoned for 10 July 1798? What will best promote his interests?)

Following the moderate coup d'état of 12 June 1798, small district sub-committees (*grondvergaderingen*) met on 10 July 1798 to elect a new Representative Body. This time the power was in the hands of moderate Republicans with an aversion to both federalism and radicalism. The rapid changes in government must have made it difficult for potential voters to decide on their standpoint. The pamphlet published by Blussé, which did not pretend to hide its sympathy for the new regime, aimed to make it easier for them to weigh up the options.

The realization that many of you are already too occupied to be able to investigate properly, within the space of just a few days, what you should be doing in the sub-committees—to properly consider your interests ... prompted us to present to you succinctly and clearly the provisions of the constitution that you must comply with, and to point out to you the position of the dangerous rocks on which your bark of state will certainly founder if you do not take care to avoid them.

²²⁴ These ledgers are not numbered and are not even part of the unsorted section of the family archive that is numbered box by box.

Both federalism and fanaticism were to be avoided. The pamphlet put the case for a middle way.

It is prejudice to accord certain privileges in government to those who are high-born or of noble lineage, but it is no less prejudice to reject everyone that has some wealth in order to place more trust in those who possess little. Experience teaches us that the suitable governor comes not from the nobility nor from the moneyed classes, nor from the middle class nor from the paupers—but should be sought in neither high nor low rank, but solely in virtue, in honesty....Look down the list of your acquaintances and elect those whose virtues and talents raise them far above the triviality of riches or needs, and whom you perceive above all others to be fitting servants of the government.

It goes on to flesh out the profile of a suitably qualified councilor by defining the political blood groups that would in any event be unacceptable:

The supporters of the stadholder—in whatever guise they lurk after the days of the 1795 revolution—should never receive your vote or your support, lest you yourself again suffer beneath the Orange yoke of yore, or are shackled by the British for Batavian gold. Shun them and the federalists likewise.... Unless you wish to expose your Fatherland to the greatest calamities and catastrophes, do not give your vote to such men as those who before the 22nd of January opposed with all their might and main the establishment of one united and indivisible nation.

However, the men who assumed power after the January coup—'tyrants of the same ilk as those who held the reins of state before the 12th of June'—should also be regarded with suspicion. Readers of this pamphlet could not avoid doing a certain amount of work themselves. The advice on voting concluded with a call to track down 'those true Patriots'

who formerly remained bound to the lofty principles that were established on the 22nd of January and subsequently ratified by you—those worthy Republicans who likewise did not fear to oppose with force the system of the federalists and to expose the deceivers of the people who, while crying aloud the words 'Liberty and Equality', endangered your general happiness. Fix your eyes on those good men who always trod the middle path Above all, choose only those known to you to be supporters of the one undivided Republic—it is to this that your prosperity is most closely bound.

This pamphlet, printed in an edition of 550, would not have reached many of the over 100,000 voters. Nonetheless, the result of the election was largely in line with the voting advice it gave. The new National Assembly

consisted chiefly of moderates, mostly from the elite of the Patriots and generally in favour of establishing one united state.²²⁵

Although the political press was already running at full tilt in the first half of 1798, Blussé's publishing house only went into action against the supposed 'tyrants' once they had been deposed. This is curious, for Pieter Blussé had emerged as a local media tycoon thanks to his office of postmaster, his prominent position as one of Dordrecht's two largest publishers at that time and his purchases of the printing-house and the *Dordrechtsche Courant* from De Leeuw and Krap in the spring of 1797. On top of this, when his oldest son became chief editor of the internationally-oriented Leiden paper, *Gazette de Leyde* in 1798, he acquired a foothold in another town. It is clear from a letter written by one of his former fellow councillors and dated 15 March 1798, the day Pieter Blussé was expelled from the town council, that his fellow citizens were aware of this key position. The letter asks him 'in the name of several members of the former council of Dordrecht & the Merwede' if he would publish in the next edition of his newspaper 'the reply which you gave this morning to the Committee of Reorganization for the municipality of this city'. Pieter's address was indeed printed in its entirety in his paper, the *Dordrechtsche Courant*, on 17 March 1798. Once again, the firm of Blussé erred on the side of caution, printing a neutral account of Pieter's dismissal. His newspaper reported in full not only his departing words but also the speeches of the 'commissioners for reorganization', including all the negative references to the dismissed council members.²²⁶ After Pieter and the other members dismissed with him left the council chamber, the reporter from the *Dordrechtsche Courant*—probably Pieter's son Adolph²²⁷—remained behind to record that the replacement had been necessary 'so that corrupt practices, supported, alas, by all manner of devices, by placing the most dangerous creatures in the majority of government positions, cannot undermine the efforts of the well-intentioned, and so that good, skilful and worthy Patriots, to whom the government has been entrusted in full, replace those haters of liberty and equality'.²²⁸

Three weeks later the same newspaper printed an item in small type—almost like a space-filler. In fact it was a form of discreet revenge. It was a

²²⁵ See Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, and De Wit, *De Nederlandse revolutie*, 170–78.

²²⁶ DC, 17 March 1798.

²²⁷ He was at that time editor. See chapter 5.

²²⁸ DC, 17 March 1798.

short poem by a certain Jacob Minheer²²⁹ lamenting his dismissal from the city council despite his personal integrity and his loyalty to the right—Patriot—cause:

Yet I thank God for it!
 I do not complain;
 My clear conscience
 Loves Liberty! Law! and Order!
 But I must tell you this,
 So that I shall no longer
 Be unjustly condemned.
 I, like William Tell!
 Shall be called a Tyrant,
 Tyrant.
 The truth is my guide
 Though it should be my fate
 To die, like Barneveld!
 On the scaffold.²³⁰

²²⁹ 'Dog daar voor dank ik God!/ 'k klaag niet:/ myn blank geweten/ Mint Vryheid! Orde! en Wet!/ maar dit moest u gezegd:/ Op dat men my niet meer:/ Veroordeeld zonder recht; Ik zal, als Willem Tel!/ een Dwingland,/ Dwingland heeten./ De waarheid is myn Gids/ al was dan ook myn Lot,/ Om als een Barneveld!/ te sterven op 't Schavot.' The poem was apparently written on 30 March 1798 in The Hague.

²³⁰ DC, 7 April 1798.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PUBLISHING TRADE IN THE LAST QUARTER OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

'The paper. He can't go a day without it.' An Analysis of Booksellers' Advertisements

The first thing that fifteen-year-old Adolph Blussé did in the morning—after rising at six, washing, saying his prayers, dressing and, before the clock struck seven, letting his discerning eye wander across the shelves in the bookshop—was to read the paper. That is, as long as he kept to the schedule drawn up for him on 8 October 1794 by his father, specifying exactly what was to be done every day and even every hour of the day to benefit his education in general and his training in the family firm of A. Blussé & Son in particular:

On Mondays, and successive days, let him observe closely everything connected with the shop and the trade. After the post has arrived let him read the newspapers, particularly the announcements of translations, new books and other offers; he should then draw up a list in which he records the prices, or whatever else may appear necessary in order to acquaint himself with all the old and new editions of works, including their prices. If he is unable to do this at that moment, the day should not speed by without his accomplishing this task.¹

For many years, the meticulous recording of book advertisements in the newspapers had been a priority for booksellers and publishers in the Dutch Republic. Since the first book advertisement appeared in a Dutch newspaper in 1624,² newspapers had developed into the major source of information for potential book buyers and booksellers alike.³ From this observation

¹ GAD, FA Blussé, inv. 29.

² The earliest-known bookseller's advertisement in the Dutch Republic dates from this year (B. van Selm, "Het komt altemael aen op het distribuweeren". De boekdistributie in de Republiek als object van onderzoek' in J.J. Kloek and W.W. Mijnhardt eds, *De productie, distributie en consumptie van cultuur* (Amsterdam 1991) 89-99, 91.

³ Around the middle of the eighteenth century a number of newspapers in the Dutch Republic were already being published in print runs of several thousand copies (J.D. Popkin,

post over the literary landscape, one could, after all, derive information about publications that might prove interesting to have in stock, and keep an eye on the activities of competitors as sources of both inspiration and instruction. Monitoring the advertisements was primarily important, though, because of a number of unwritten rules governing copyright.

The Dutch Republic did not enact a comprehensive copyright law until 1803, and before this it was customary for booksellers to claim translation rights by placing announcements in newspapers on a first come, first served basis. A publisher who embarked on a translation without first putting a notice in the papers risked finding himself at the centre of an unedifying wrangle—also fought out in the press. If another bookseller had already advertised his plans to bring out a translation of the same work the recriminations would fly, persisting even into the forewords of the works in question. In 1761 there was what has become a classic case of just such a bitter feud between the Amsterdam publishers Baalde and Van Tongerlo, who each claimed the rights to the translation of the *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* right up until Van Tongerlo's death; they advanced their claims in newspapers, journals of literary criticism and prefaces.⁴ Less well known is the conflict that arose six years before this, in 1755, between Abraham Blussé and his partners Van Hoogstraten and De Koning on the one hand, and the Hague bookseller, Pieter van Cleef, on the other.

A few months after announcing his translation of *De opregte hoveling* (The Constant Courtier) in July 1751, Van Cleef was astonished to read an

'Print culture in the Netherlands on the eve of the Revolution' in M.C. Jacob and W.W. Mijnhardt eds, *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century*, 273–91). See also the figures for print runs given by Van Goinga (*Alom te bekomen*, 36–37). The newspaper *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*, hereafter abbreviated to OHC, had an average print run of 4,600 in 1742. The 'home' edition of the *Amsterdamsche Courant* had an average print run of 5,060 in 1767, while the number printed for the regional edition during this period fluctuated around 1,250. In 1778 the home edition reached a record print run of 6,500. She does not hazard an estimate of the readership on the basis of these figures, but suggests, in the light of a study of foreign newspaper circulation, that we should be thinking in terms of multiplying this figure by ten. In other words, each newspaper that was bought would be read by ten people (*Ibid.*, 38). These could be several members of a family in a household, people lending papers to one another, people reading papers in coffee houses and in schools. In his thesis on education in Dordrecht in the eighteenth century, Esseboom observes that the *Rotterdamse Courant*—before the establishment of the *Dordrechtsche Courant*—was used as teaching material in schools. He bases this conclusion on bills sent by booksellers to various schools (Esseboom, *Onderwysinghe der jeught*, 205–06, 226).

⁴ See A. Nieuweboer, 'De populariteit van het vertaalde verhalend proza in 18e-eeuws Nederland en de rol van de boekhandel bij de praktijk van vertalen', *Documentatieblad werkgroep achttiende eeuw* 18 (1982) 119–41, 126–31.

announcement promoting the very same work, to be brought out by the Dordrecht company.⁵ Within four days a new announcement appeared, in which Van Cleef emphasized that *his* announcement preceded the other and gave a concise explanation of Dutch copyright customs.⁶ By virtue of this advertisement Van Cleef argued that he held the 'sole copyright' since he 'was not aware that, at an earlier date, anyone else had announced, in accordance with all rights and reasonableness, and also according to booksellers' tradition' the intention of publishing a translation. Thus he, Pieter van Cleef, had nothing good to say about the absurdity of 'Ab. Blussé, bookseller of Dordrecht, and his partners' plans' to print and publish the work 'without giving him any prior notice to this effect'. He described the whole business as a form of 'undercutting', which he said was not only 'improper' but could also 'have damaging consequences for other booksellers'. To cap it all, as intimated in Van Cleef's advertisement, the Dordrecht version was of inferior quality. His own publication would differ considerably from the Dordrecht work 'both as regards the translation and the printing'. Van Cleef's criticism became rather less subtle when the Dordrecht company picked up the gauntlet, informing readers in The Hague that they had long since made plans for the translation and had only recently found out about Van Cleef's intentions through his advertisement. The company challenged the public to make an impartial judgment: did they not have 'the same right to translate and publish a book as he [Van Cleef] even though we did not announce this in advance' and concluded their advertisement with the observation that their publication 'would be no better or worse' than Van Cleef's, but simply 'good'. In Van Cleef's reaction to this, published on 24 November 1751, he denounced 'the trivial, preposterous and unfounded counter-advertisement of the Dordrecht publishers ... whose translation and letterpress will prove as bad as each other and indeed disastrous.' Thus ended the discussion, and both publishers brought out their own translation of the work.

More often, however, if a publisher discovered too late that someone else was planning to bring out a book he had also thought of publishing, he would look for alternatives in order to avoid flooding the small market. Negotiations would follow, and sometimes one publisher would buy off another; the one who had been first to advertise would then publish the

⁵ The Hague Friday newspaper, '*s Gravenhaegse Vrydagse Courant*, hereafter abbreviated as SVC, 20 October 1755. I thank José de Kruijf who referred me to these announcements.

⁶ SVC, 24 October 1755.

work. For example, the Amsterdam bookseller J. Sluytman, having announced a translation of Basedow's *Elementarwerk*, was reprimanded by a company of large Amsterdam booksellers who claimed to have published an earlier advertisement. Sluytman then informed the public by way of an advertisement that he had been unaware that Meier and Warnars and J. Allart had published a preliminary notice of their intention to translate Basedow's *work*, and that he would stop his enterprise forthwith. He said that the Amsterdam company would shortly publish a detailed subscription plan.⁷ However, prospective subscribers had to wait another four months before this plan appeared.⁸ The publication—eight weighty volumes produced by the finest Dutch translators and editors, among them Petrus Camper, Theodorus van Swinden, J.F. Martinet, Ahasverus van den Berg and Rhijnvis Feith, together with the famous illustrator Reinier Vinkeles—in fact never saw the light of day. This caused Lieutenant Grabner, a German who visited the Netherlands in 1792, to remark that in the Dutch Republic there was 'proportionally less written and printed than in England, France and Germany' although the Dutch newspapers earned 'astounding sums' from advertisements in which books were heralded with a great fanfare.⁹

The German lieutenant's travel journal reveals that he had also spotted another factor that made newspapers essential to Dutch booksellers. Newspapers, he said, took the place of the German book fair catalogue.¹⁰ The bookseller in Germany could find a list of recent publications in the catalogue, whereas his Dutch counterpart had to make do with the fragmented information provided by various newspapers. It was not until the appearance in 1790 of Saakes's monthly list of new book titles, *Maandelijkse lijst van nieuw uitgekomen boeken*, that this situation came to an end.¹¹

My analysis of the publications of the *Rotterdamsche Courant* from 1770 to 1791¹² shows that booksellers not only gleaned information from the

⁷ RC, 15 November 1785, 17 November 1785.

⁸ RC, 9 March 1786.

⁹ J. Grabner, *Brieven over de Vereenigde Nederlanden* (Haarlem 1792) 406, 409.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 409.

¹¹ J.J. Kloek, '1 January 1790: A.B. Saakes begins the "Lijst van nieuw uitgekomen boeken"—the modernization of the book trade (De modernisering van het boekbedrijf)' in M.A. Schenkeveld-van der Dussen ed., *Nederlandse literatuur een geschiedenis* (Groningen 1993) 388-95.

¹² A thorough study has been made of these years. Naturally, I was most interested in advertisements placed by A. Blussé & Son, but the advertisements of other publishers were also examined to provide a balance. Sometimes incidental finds in other newspapers have also been used.

newspapers about the book supply but also drew inspiration from accounts of their colleagues' initiatives and other news that they read in them.

When publishers attempted to respond to topical events in their presentation and reporting of the content of a work they were advertising, their advertisements would soon be followed by those of their colleagues. Thus, for instance, the Amsterdam publisher Allart placed an advertisement, scarcely a month after the Prussian ruler Frederick II had breathed his last, announcing that he had signed a contract with the German publisher of Frederick's yet-to-be-written biography stating that 'immediately' the work appeared in German he could bring out a translation in Dutch titled *Het leven van Frederik de IIde* (The Life of Frederick II).¹³ This prompted other publishers, who hoped to share in the pickings, to jump on to the bandwagon. D. onder de Linden saw an opportunity to sell off old stock, offering a 30 percent reduction on the copies he still had of an earlier biography of this Prussian king.¹⁴ Apparently they sold so well that a few months later he reprinted one volume of the history so that he had a hundred copies of the complete eight-volume work, which he put on the market at half price.¹⁵ At the same time the Rotterdam publishers De Leeuw and Krap brought out a far cheaper one-volume work on the life of Frederick II.¹⁶

Clearly, it was not only young aspiring booksellers like Adolph Blussé who could learn a lot from scouring the daily papers; they are an indispensable source of information for book historians, providing considerable insight into the business practices of booksellers and publishers in the eighteenth century. This makes it all the more remarkable that the systematic study of newspaper advertisements has only recently got under way.¹⁷ The likeliest explanation is that a fascination with the identity of the historical reader, a late twentieth-century vogue, overshadowed interest in the technical aspects of the book trade. Research into innovation in book production and distribution was only legitimate when possible discoveries—preferably large-scale developments—could provide an immediate

¹³ RC, 29 August 1786.

¹⁴ RC, 16 September 1786.

¹⁵ RC, 10 March 1787.

¹⁶ RC, 7 October 1786.

¹⁷ The much-cited book by Hannie van Goinga, *Alom te bekomen*, consequently fills a serious gap. However, it appeared too late for me to benefit from her research results in my own investigations into advertisements. I was, though, able to incorporate her observations in some places in my text. My decision to study the period 1771-1790 is related in part to the fact that she studied the period 1720-1770. This way I have avoided overlap.

answer to the burning question as to whether or not there was a reading revolution in the eighteenth century and, if so, which social groups constituted these new readers.

However, eighteenth-century newspapers also prove to be highly informative for those studying reading culture in a more limited sense. The text and tone of book advertisements is far less businesslike, and consequently more commercial, than the historians J.J. Kloek and W.W. Mijnhardt suggested in 1990, when they observed that until well into the nineteenth century the book trade 'confined itself to unadorned, traditional announcements of newly-published books' and that there was essentially no aggressive advertising.¹⁸

Both aspects of the book trade, the organizational and the technical, and the strategies that can be observed in book advertisements are the subject of the following section. The chief source is the booksellers' announcements published in the *Rotterdamsche Courant* between 1770 and 1790. The advertisements placed by A. Blussé & Son were systematically researched and trends in the advertisements of other publishers were observed.

The Organization of the Book Trade

Newspaper advertisements reveal that it was common practice in the Dutch Republic—certainly after 1770—to send batches of new books on consignment.¹⁹ That this system was widely used appears from advertisements placed by booksellers just starting up in business, informing their colleagues that they wished to be sent all new titles without exception and assuring them that they would do everything possible to promote and sell these books. This is confirmed by advertisements placed by booksellers who wished to close their shops, as did the Widow J. Bosch, who announced that she was closing down her business and requested her colleagues not to send her any more consignments.²⁰ It was apparently such common practice that advertisements do not mention this sales method. Only when

¹⁸ This remark was made in an introduction which 'through a somewhat provocative and simplistic presentation' was intended to 'give a refreshing boost to research' but had to wait a long time before provoking a reaction. For the period 1760-1770 Van Goinga observed a remarkable difference in tone compared with the preceding years (Van Goinga, *Alom te bekomen* (1999), 51) (J.J. Kloek and W.W. Mijnhardt, 'Negentiende-eeuwse leescultuur', *De negentiende eeuw* 14 (1990) 113-19, 117).

¹⁹ Van Goinga, 'Alom te bekomen' (1996), 55-87.

²⁰ RC, 10 January 1781.

this was not the case, because of a very small print run or, in the case of remaindered books, because of the limited number of copies remaining, is this explicitly stated in the advertisement. The extensive list that generally follows suggests that books with an average print run were widely distributed. Blussé placed an advertisement saying that because a work written in Latin, a thesis by D'Arnaud, had a small print run, he had only sent it to a few booksellers, but in his next list he nonetheless mentions sixteen.²¹ He also gave a second bibliophile edition of B. Fremery's *Romeo and Juliet* such a small print run that he could only send it to a small group of twenty booksellers, whom he mentions by name.²²

During the 1780s we may also observe a new phenomenon: advertisements asking booksellers to send back as quickly as possible titles that were doing well and in danger of selling out at the publishers. Requests of this nature might be politely worded, but sometimes took on a more aggressive tone. For instance, the Amsterdam publisher Johannes Allart threatened colleagues who did not return copies of Rhijnvis Feith's *Thirsa* 'immediately' with a hefty bill.²³ Pieter Blussé, although clearly wishing to have some books returned as soon as possible and urging haste, chose not to threaten his colleagues: 'those booksellers who have received the volumes on commission are requested to return their remaining copies, the sooner the better'.²⁴ This is yet another indication of how common it was to use the sale-or-return method—while also revealing the bottleneck inherent in the system. The publisher ran all the risks associated with stocks and his ultimate turnover remained uncertain long after the books had been distributed to the sellers. This was to become a very risky business during the 1780s, when political upheavals followed hard on one another's heels and the readers' demand for topical reading matter meant that books swiftly became outdated.

Remainders

The public demand for news combined with the liquidity problems caused by the commission system probably explains the publishers' tendency to remainder books on a large scale. In the 1770s and 80s the *Rotterdamsche Courant* was full of cheap offers of old titles. Generally speaking these books

²¹ Spread over nine towns and cities (RC, 28 May 1774).

²² RC, 13 April 1786.

²³ RC, 7 December 1784.

²⁴ RC, 30 August 1788.

went for a little over half to two-thirds of the original price, and were never sold by the original publisher. This practice evidently became so widespread that publishers would anticipate readers' expectation of an eventual price reduction by stressing in their advertisements that 'the print run is so limited that the work will never be offered at a reduced price'²⁵ or that the price of a title—albeit an older one—'has been maintained'.²⁶

If we consider the length of time that passed before some of the titles on the Blussé list were reduced, readers who wished to build up their library at half price would certainly have had to exercise a good deal of patience. It was 21 years before the three-volume dictionary of natural history by V. de Bomare, *Algemene en beredenerent woordenboek der natuurlijke historie*, published by Blussé in 1767 was offered for three-quarters of the original price—by Krap in 1788.²⁷ In the same year Allart offered the 28-volume *De nieuwe reisiger* (The New Traveller) by La Porte, published by Blussé between 1766 and 1783, for about two-thirds of the original price.²⁸ The remaining copies of the fifteen-year-old publication on the history of dentistry, *Natuurlijke historie der tanden*, were bought up by Loosjes, who sold them for less than half the original price.²⁹ It was eighteen years before a new textbook for notaries, *Nieuwe oeffenschool der notarissen* by Schoolhouder, first published in 1776, was reduced.³⁰ The bargain hunters who were interested in the 1778 edition of Cave's *Eerste Christendom* (*Primitive Christianity*) did not have to wait quite so long. After five years the title could be bought more cheaply from another bookseller.³¹ We may ask, however, whether the Blussé list is truly representative in this respect. As we shall discover later, Blussé was a publisher who concentrated on producing works with a long shelf life. A systematic study of the interval between the year of publication and the year when a book was offered for sale at a reduced price, and particularly any temporal shifts within this, would provide a great deal of information about the life cycles of books in the second

²⁵ In an advertisement placed by J.B. Elwe for the first part of J. Kok's *Amsteldamsche jaarboeken*, RC, October 1781.

²⁶ In an advertisement placed by M. de Bruyn for a title published by F. Ridderus, RC, 27 October 1781.

²⁷ RC, 25 March 1788; offered by Krap.

²⁸ RC, 25 September 1788. This is discussed more fully in chapter 6.

²⁹ RC, 11 September 1788.

³⁰ It was offered for 14 stivers instead of 25 by the Amsterdam publisher J. Weppelman, RC, 1 November 1783.

³¹ W. Cave, *Het eerste Christendom* (5th edition, 2 vols., Dordrecht 1778) was sold by the Dordrecht bookseller J. de Leeuw for 2 guilders and 10 stivers instead of the advertised 3 guilders and 15 stivers, RC, 1 November 1783.

half of the eighteenth century, including possible changes in the reading public's interests.

The first problems to be faced when undertaking such a time-consuming study can, though, be outlined in advance. The advertisements indicate that the distinction between publishing and the remainder business in the second half of the eighteenth century was extraordinarily blurred. The remainder side of the business could take various forms. It might simply mean selling on batches of books taken over from other booksellers without making any changes, but it could equally involve consignments—with any missing volumes restored, or supplemented with new volumes, illustrations and an index—offered at a lower price than the original edition in the hope of attracting a new group of buyers. Johannes Allart, for instance, added 'a fine set of detailed maps' to the fifty remaining copies of *De nieuwe reisiger* (The New Traveller) which he had bought from Blussé,³² while Pieter Blussé himself transformed a periodical published by Pieter Meijer into a 31-volume set of books, reprinting missing sections.³³ During this period, moreover, books frequently changed owner and the new 'publisher' might sometimes be a little economical with the truth. There are several instances where the original price was inflated quite considerably so that the reduction appeared greater than it really was. Bomare's natural history dictionary, which Jan Krap advertised in 1788, had cost 20 guilders when Blussé published it 21 years earlier, not 28 guilders as Krap claimed. The saving offered by Krap was consequently 5, rather than 13 guilders.³⁴ Sometimes, too, remainders from batches that had previously been reduced by other publishers were advertised as if this were a new reduction. *Eerste Christendom*, the Dutch translation of *Primitive Christianity* first published in 1692, was already quite old when Blussé brought it out in 1778, but at least it was a new edition—the fifth. After this edition had passed through the hands of Krap's clients for the sum of 2 guilders and 10 stivers in 1783, the same fifth edition, now 'thoroughly revised and improved in style and language', but actually identical, was put out by Bohn in 1789, with a likewise identical price reduction.³⁵

³² RC, 25 September 1788.

³³ This was the periodical *Algemeene oeffenschool van konsten en wetenschappen* to which readers could subscribe for the sum of 45 guilders rather than 75, RC, 14 May 1789, repeated on 23 May 1789 and 2 June 1789.

³⁴ RC, 25 March 1788.

³⁵ RC, 17 December 1789.

Old Wine in New Casks and Vice Versa

The advertisements also reveal more subtle methods of giving old books a new gloss. Publishers used contemporary events—religious festivals, commemorations, the start of a new school term—to draw attention to the titles on their lists. In February 1775, for instance, Blussé took advantage of a national day of prayer to re-advertise Barueth's 1772 *Hollands en Zeelands jubeljaar* (Holland's and Zeeland's Jubilee Year). To mark the occasion, a time 'when remembering the founding of the Netherlands' freedom and religious liberties can lead to confession and atonement', the book was temporarily offered at a reduced price. October and November, on the other hand, were excellent months for the promotion of school books like the work published by Blussé in 1773, *Volledige inleiding tot de algebra* (A complete introduction to algebra), which was promoted in October 1777 as a useful handbook 'in the coming winter courses'.³⁶ In November 1778, when lessons had already started, it was advertised again, together with De Villehuet's *De scheepsbestierder* (*The Manoeuvrer, or Skilful Seaman*) 'to be used in winter studies'³⁷ and yet again in October 1789 as useful to 'practitioners of the mathematical sciences'.³⁸

Around 1778 there arose a tendency to link advertisements not only to annual events but also to recent military and political developments.³⁹ Inspired in part by the American War of Independence, which had started in 1775, there was growing anti-English sentiment in the Dutch Republic, even before the outbreak of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War in 1780. An advertisement of 29 October 1778 for the travel guide to England, *Leidsman en reiswyzer door Engeland*, played on these national feelings with considerable sophistication. This book, it was suggested, was an essential aid to a complete understanding of the 'infamous' nation. This paradoxical feeling of antipathy towards and fascination with England surfaced again in 1779, after that country had unilaterally broken its trade agreement with the Netherlands and following a number of skirmishes with the English navy. In an advertisement of 14 October 1779 for the likewise rather dated *De vryheid in den burgerstaat*, describing 'the immense longing of the Dutch for Freedom; their bloody wars ... Freedom fosters learning and knowledge; Free trade' there is a far-from-subtle echo of the adage 'Free shipping, free

³⁶ RC, 7 October 1777.

³⁷ RC, 5 November 1778.

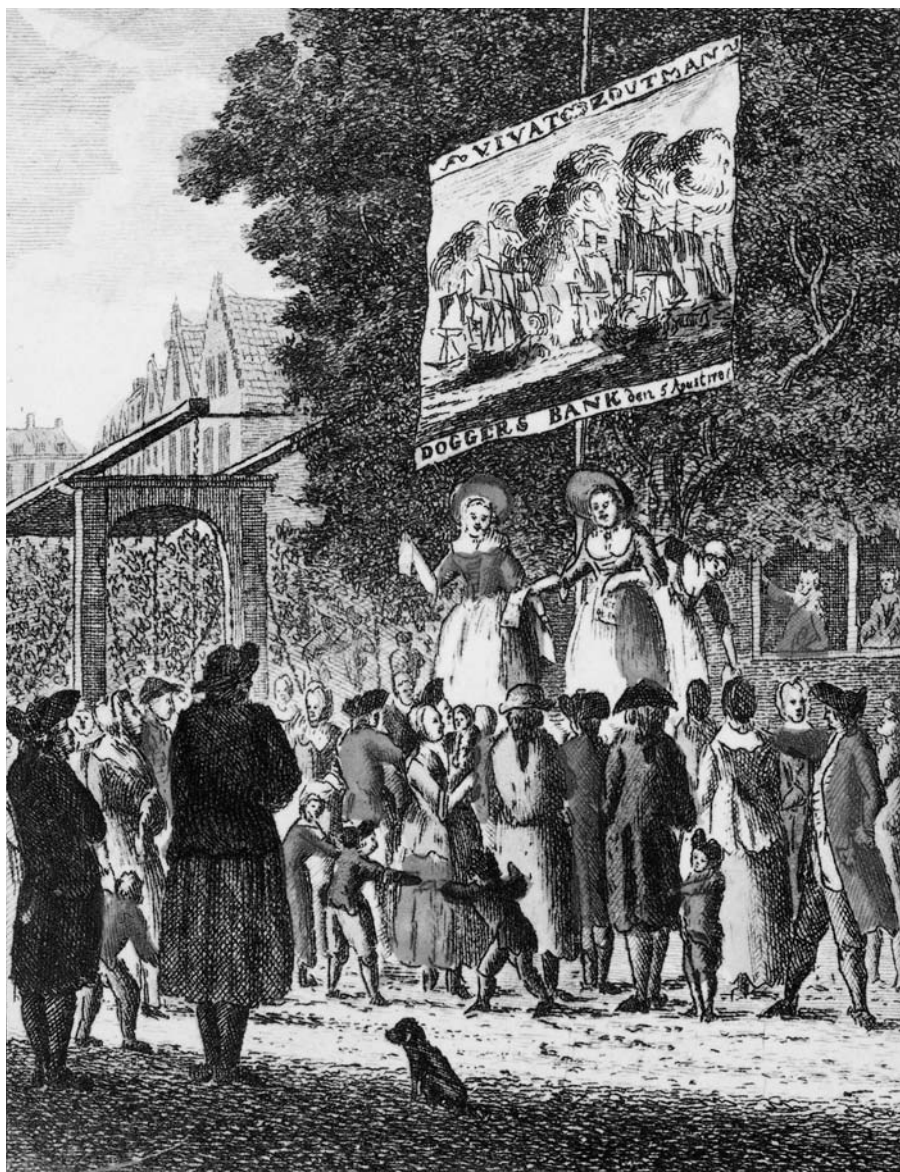
³⁸ RC, 29 October 1789.

³⁹ Cf. Dongelmans, *Johannes Immerzeel Junior*, 158–59.

goods' championed by the States-General at that time. Nine days later there appeared an advertisement for a book titled *Geweldenaryen van verscheidene Engelsche zeerovers* (Violent Acts of Sundry English Pirates) on sale at a considerably reduced price. It would seem the book was a compilation of old news in a new guise: 'gruesome acts of wanton cruelty committed by notorious English highwaymen and footpads, murderers, burglars, rogues and swindlers ... The life stories of others who have reformed their wicked ways ... with a summary of English laws and judicial procedures'. Pieter Blussé is one of many booksellers to have had this work on his list. When advertising his own publication of a Dutch-English dictionary, undertaken with Holtrop, he chose a neutral text more suited to the genre.

An illustrated book, *Algemeene en staatkundige konstplaat van het jaar 1780*, containing fifteen contemporary prints depicting 'the present situation in the wars' between England, France, Spain and America, was published on 26 September 1780. Soon after this, the Dutch Republic was also drawn into the conflict. On 20 December 1780 England declared war on the Republic. The situation became apparent even to those newspaper readers who only had time to skim the book advertisements. As early as 16 December 1780 they could read 'REPUBLIC IN GRAVE DANGER', under the motto 'BE LOYAL AND TRUST NO ONE, published today at 4 stivers'. During the next year there was a flood of advertisements for older books, in which they were given a topical label, and for new books on nautical topics, English politics or, specifically, the war with England. Pieter Blussé was first on the scene, advertising on 11 January 1781 his newly published book *De scheepsbestierder* (*The Manoeuvrer, or Skilful Seaman*) containing a list of shipping and sailing terms 'in order to assist rapid learning of all the words and their meanings'. The book, contrary to the suggestion in the advertisement, had first been published in 1768. Blussé's competitor Johannes Allart needed a little more time. On 24 March 1781 he announced a Dutch translation of William Falconer's *Universal Dictionary of the Marine*. In February that year the publishers Conradi and Van der Plaats had to settle for announcing a volume recounting the 'mighty feats of Dutch naval heroes of old, Jacob van Heemskerk, Piet Heyn, Jan van Brakel, Jacob van Wassenaar' in their previously published eight-volume series of biographies, *Levensbeschrijvingen van Nederlandse mannen en vrouwen*.⁴⁰ The Rotterdam publisher G. Manheer, on the other hand, brought out a book aimed

⁴⁰ RC, 15 February 1781.



18. Book illustrations were used as a means of commenting on current events. This print shows women singing—according to the placard in the background—about General Zoutman's victory. Engraving by K.F. Bendorp in the children's book *Kermis-tafreeltjes* (n.d.) published by A. Blussé & Son. National Library, The Hague.

specifically at youthful readers, with the far more topical title, *De oorlog tussen Holland en Engeland toegezongen aan de Nederlandsche jeugd en na deszelfs vatbaarheid ingerigt* (The War between Holland and England, dedicated to the Youth of the Netherlands and Especially Designed for their Abilities).⁴¹ A month later, Blussé also had a new publication in the shops, a book urging the Dutch to defend their freedom on land and at sea, *Eerspoor aan de Nederlanders ter verdediging van hun vryheit en zeevardye*. It announced a new organization that would present medals 'to encourage and reward Dutch heroism'.⁴² The Rotterdam publisher Reinier Arrenberg, it appeared, had an eye for the flip side of the coin. In July 1781 he advertised a *Verhandeling over de voornaamste kwetzuuren, die den scheeps-heelmeesteren op 's lands schepen van oorlog kunnen voorkomen ... mitsgader over het al dan niet afzetten der leden*, a treatise on 'the principal injuries that the ship's doctors on our country's warships may encounter ... more-over on whether or not to amputate limbs'.

In August 1781 it seemed that there was at last cause for rejoicing. The Dutch admiral Zoutman defeated the English on 5 August, and on the twenty-fifth of the same month, to celebrate this Pyrrhic victory, the Utrecht publisher D. Baars brought out *Lauwerkrans om de hoofden van Nederlandsch dappere helden ter gelegenheid van hunne overwinning* (A Laurel Wreath to Adorn the Brows of Brave Dutch Heroes, on the Occasion of their Victory). On 15 September Blussé followed with the announcement of a prospectus for *Lauwerbladen voor de zonen der vryheit* (Laurel Wreaths for the Sons of Liberty), and only a few days later the Utrecht publisher J. Visch advertised an earlier publication, *Lauwerkrans gevlochten om de hoofden van Neerlands waterhelden* celebrating Dutch naval heroes.⁴³ In this jubilant atmosphere, the Amsterdam publisher H. Keyzer thought there would be a market for a reprint of a work by the seventeenth-century clergyman F. Ridderus on 'the qualities and great concerns of a supreme commander ... in wartime'.⁴⁴ And the Leiden publisher Honkoop saw the victory as an opportunity to re-advertise with contemporary references a work dealing with the sixteenth-century siege of Leiden and the city's heroic resistance.⁴⁵

⁴¹ RC, 15 February 1781.

⁴² RC, 17 March 1781.

⁴³ RC, 20 September 1781.

⁴⁴ RC, 20 September 1781.

⁴⁵ This is a work that was reprinted in Leiden year in, year out: A. Severinus, *Vaderlandsche historie der belegering en het ontzet der stad Leiden*, with illustrations of 'brave patriots ... who should be remembered only with honour and respect, and especially at this juncture' (RC, 2 October 1781).

Other fashionable issues in the eighteenth-century book market followed a similar pattern. Publishers seized upon news of wars, revolutions or uprisings, reacting quickly to bring out new works dealing with these topics and in the meantime making the best of what they had by updating old publications in their advertising campaigns. Some of these publications lent themselves so successfully to this ploy that they could be trotted out time and again. The biography of Frederick the Great of Prussia is a good example of this trend. The sudden appearance in 1778 of an advertisement for the eight-volume *Historische beschryving der doorluchtige daden, aanmerklyke krygsverrichtingen en andere bedryven van Frederik den Groote* (Historical Description of the Illustrious Deeds, Remarkable Acts of War and Other Actions of Frederick the Great), first published in Dutch in 1758, must have been connected with the outbreak of the War of the Bavarian Succession. Similarly, Blussé's book describing the royal Prussian residences in Berlin and Potsdam—the work which, at the time of his engagement, he had wished to dedicate first to his fiancée Sophia, then to Queen Sophie and finally to Sophia's guardian—reappeared in 1778, evidently to feed a certain appetite for information about Frederick's empire. It was emphasized on this occasion that, as 'evidence of its approval' the German version of the work had been dedicated to 'the KING himself'.⁴⁶ In 1786, when Frederick was so obliging as to die, the records of his 'illustrious deeds' could once more be taken out and dusted off.⁴⁷ After Frederick's nephew invaded the Dutch Republic in 1787 in order to restore the stadholder to power, several publishers saw a chance to cash in on the renewed interest in his predecessor. Several titles on the life of Frederick the Great appeared in 1788, among them, again, his 'illustrious deeds'.⁴⁸

The predictions of the astrologist and doctor, J.C. Ludeman, who died in 1757, as published in the *Spiegel der waereld* (Mirror of the World) in the 1780s proved suitable for a wide variety of uses. Some of them came true, and his book was repeatedly reissued. For instance, he had predicted 1784—the end of the fourth Anglo-Dutch War—as the 'annus mirabilis for the present war, the causes and end of it'.⁴⁹ Immediately after the seizure of

⁴⁶ RC, 8 September 1778.

⁴⁷ Frederick the Great died on 17 August 1786. On 29 August Johannes Allart placed an advertisement for a translation from the French of *The Life of Frederick the Great*. D. onder de Linden's advertisement for the *Historische beschryving der doorluchtige daden*... was placed in September.

⁴⁸ RC, 16 October 1788.

⁴⁹ RC, 9 December 1784.

power in the Netherlands on 28 May 1787, when the inadequate stadholder William V was sent packing, Ludeman's book, *Mirror of the World*, and his biography were offered at half the original price, because 'they are most remarkable to read, especially now, while many important events of our time, both at home and abroad, are as clearly predicted in them as if they were written as historical accounts, for example: The terrible and astonishing events of the years 1780 to 1792, and great upheavals in the country which would lead, as a result of political intrigue, to a breach of the peace, and that, after a preceding bloodbath, the free people would stand firm and return to their former glory'.⁵⁰ The same advertisement, which concentrated mainly on the tumult, was pressed into service again in October 1787, after the Prussian invasion and the Orangist takeover.⁵¹

The prophecies of the visionary doctor Ludeman, who, wearing his astrologer's hat, was able to listen to the voices of the planets, were apparently written down in about 1756 by his friend Master Franciscus, who was in fact the lawyer, swindler and hack writer Franciscus Lievens Kersteman. The work was published posthumously.⁵² The earliest publication was in 1758 and was a huge success, selling 2,200 copies.⁵³ Reprint followed reprint—with Master Franciscus continually adding new keys and other embellishments, all said to come from Ludeman.⁵⁴ These additions were supposedly not published until later because Ludeman wished to hold off on some of his revelations until the time was ripe for them. But since these keys repeatedly cited pages from the printed text in *De Spiegel*, the suspicion arises that the prophecies, even if they were not actually records of events, were in any case of a later date.⁵⁵ The conclusion is obvious. Whereas we have until now been dealing with old titles presented as new, in this case the title was newer than the publisher was prepared to admit in his advertisement. At the same time the book was older than desirable. In 1787, the year *De Spiegel* (The Mirror) was again offered at a cut price because of its topical value, there also appeared a *Nieuwe Spiegel der waereld*, (New

⁵⁰ RC, 9 June 1787.

⁵¹ RC, 30 October 1787.

⁵² See D.H.J. ter Horst, *Franciscus Lievens Kersteman. Het leven van een 18e-eeuwschen avonturier* (Amsterdam 1937) 99-169, esp. 123; A.J. Hanou, 'Planeten en politiek', *Toth, tijdschrift voor vrijmetselaren* 46 (1995) 27-33; *Ibid.*, 'Een dodengesprek (1768)', *Toth* 46 (1995) 119-22.

⁵³ Ter Horst, *Franciscus Lievens Kersteman*, 121.

⁵⁴ According to Ter Horst at least 99 percent of all the writing published under Ludeman's name was Kersteman's invention (Ter Horst, *Franciscus Lievens Kersteman*, 123).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 126.



19. Profile of a woman lacking 'delicacy, tenderness, depth', although Lavater is convinced of her 'truly good nature'. Published in J.C. Lavater, *Over de physiognomie* IV (4 vols.; Amsterdam 1783). National Library, The Hague.

Mirror of the World), which was said to contain secrets that could only be published thirty years after Ludeman's death—and one year after Kersteman had been released from prison.⁵⁶ Presumably the booksellers felt it would be wise to get rid of their old stock of *De Spiegel* as quickly as possible.

The tendency to turn towards astrology in uncertain times, which Kersteman and his publishers seized upon so eagerly, was nothing new. In the last decades of the eighteenth century, however, new methods of gaining some prior certainty were also discovered—for instance, ways of judging at first glance the character of one's fellow human beings. In 1780 the publisher Johannes Allart opened the floodgates for this new psychological study with his publication of Lavater's *Physiognomiekunde* (The Study of Physiognomy) from which one could learn to read people's characters from their facial features.⁵⁷ Five days after Allart's announcement in the *Rot-*

⁵⁶ Ibid., 132.

⁵⁷ In the original work translated from the English by Gerrit Paape in 1786, *Vrolyken reis van een Engelschman* (Jolly Journey of an Englishman), Lavater's theories of physiognomy are even trotted out to prove Orange's friendship towards the people, (A. Nieuweboer, De "Vrolijke reis van Gerrit Paape". Een uitstapje naar de achttiende-eeuwse vertaalpraktijk') *MJCW* 20 (1997) 51-60, 58). On the study of the physiognomy: N.H. Frijda, *Gelaat en karakter* (2nd edition Haarlem 1953); W. Brednow, *Von Lavater zu Darwin* (Berlin 1969); A. Staring, 'De silhouette in Nederland' in *Kunsthistorische verkenningen* (The Hague 1948).

terdamsche Courant on 13 January 1780, Pieter Blussé advertised a similar but more comprehensive study of physiognomy; it would contain 'the most important thoughts of earlier and later writers, in particular those of Mr Lavater'—and at the same time would be more concise and affordable. 'This work, compiled by an expert from our own country and ornamented with a considerable variety of plates by Dutch masters will be available in its entirety at a very moderate price.'⁵⁸ Blussé's *Korte doch volledige hand-leiding tot de physiognomiekunde* (Brief but Complete Handbook of the Study of Physiognomy) cost a mere 4 guilders and 10 stivers as compared with the 32 guilders that Allart's readers would have to fork out. The Amsterdam publisher Gerrit Bom tackled the same topic but aimed at a less well-heeled readership when he announced—for just 50 stivers—a *Physiognomische Catechismus* (Catechism of Physiognomy) containing no fewer than '103 copper engravings of illustrations and pictures of faces' from which it was possible 'to discover in brief all that was necessary to learn this art'.⁵⁹ Those who bought Stubbe's *Physiognomische almanach voor het jaar 1781* had to be content with far fewer illustrations; 'besides four silhouettes, showing Lavater, his wife, son and daughter' this work contained 'another ... 18 copper engravings of physiognomies'.⁶⁰ But then, they only had to pay 12 stivers for the publication, which also contained other useful information which one would expect to find in an almanac. In the years that followed there was a continuous stream of advertisements for physiognomic works of all sorts, sizes and prices—from instructive reference books to physiognomic travel guides, farces and diaries.⁶¹ To gain a picture of how booksellers competed with each other through advertisements, however, we need only concern ourselves with the early days of this literary craze, when Johannes Allart and Pieter Blussé tried to get the better of each other.

Allart was one of the first Dutch publishers to attempt to explore the market for a physiognomic work. In his advertisement of 13 January 1780 he promised that his new publication, in four volumes with 400 plates in full octavo, would be on sale for 'the bargain price' of 32 guilders. But in that cold winter the rivers froze and the blurbs and prospectuses could not be delivered to the bookshops on time. So Allart had recourse to the newspapers, and had a large section of his prospectus—the text filled an entire

⁵⁸ RC, 18 January 1780.

⁵⁹ RC, 30 September 1780.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ See the periodicals *Algemeene Vaderlandsche Letteroefeningen* for 1780 to 1782. Hereafter abbreviated to ALVO.



20. Two engravings from Blussé's publication *Handleiding tot de physionomiekunde* (Manual of Physiognomy), showing the French philosopher Voltaire at a young age and shortly before his death. According to the anonymous author of this book, who 'signed' the foreword with his silhouette, the lower image of Voltaire is 'much better, and expresses the man's character, in particular, much better than the upper one'. National Library, The Hague.

column—printed as an advertisement. This laid great emphasis on the beautiful production of the book, the ‘meticulously’ printed plates and the attractive type, the vast number of illustrations and the originality of the work. The text, edited and translated by the ‘experienced pen’ of J.W. van Haar, was derived from ‘original copy’ written by Mr Lavater; the plates would be printed ‘under the supervision of Mr Lavater himself’, and the engravings had been made by the same artists who ‘made the plates for the large work’. With all this, the public could scarcely reach any other conclusion than that ‘a work of this nature has never before been produced with so much authenticity and accuracy’. To be sure that these recommendations would not rebound on him—some, after all, might doubt the viability of such a magnificent work—the publisher clearly felt it necessary to depart from the standard practice for volumes published on subscription: for this book subscribers did not have to make any payment when they put their names on the list.

During his advertising campaign Allart was thwarted by more than frozen rivers—he found another publisher encroaching on his territory. He planned his publication of Lavater’s original work for June, only to find that Blussé, likewise advertising in January, was promising a rival work, ‘presently at the press’, which would be available in March.⁶² Not only would this book appear sooner, it was more wide-ranging because it included the ideas of other scholars besides Lavater, more concise, cheaper and more practical. Unlike Blussé, Allart says nothing in his advertisement about the possibility of using the book ‘to teach oneself this skill through practice’, nor does he capitalize on the mercantilist and nationalist feelings that were on the increase at that time. To a certain extent, that route was blocked by his strategy of emphasizing the original nature of his publication and by the fact that Lavater, one of the founders of the science of physiognomy, was Swiss. Pieter Blussé, who—unlike his competitor—was an active member of the *Oeconomische Tak* (Economic Branch), may have been more attuned to the persuasive power of economic arguments. In his advertisement he announced in capital letters that his book had been compiled by ‘A SCHOLAR from OUR COUNTRY’ and that the illustrations had been done by ‘Dutch artists’. A month later, Allart had picked up the signals. He had ‘agreed with Mr Lavater ... that he would supply 250 plates instead of 200 without the subscribers having to pay any more; these plates would chiefly be ‘portraits of famous Dutchmen who had done their country a

⁶² RC, 18 January 1780.

great service through their deeds and writings'.⁶³ The same day Blussé announced, again in capital letters, the forthcoming publication of 'AN ORIGINAL DUTCH WORK ON THE STUDY OF PHYSIOGNOMY' in which 'the Netherlanders' will be able to find useful information, all compiled by a 'DUTCH SCHOLAR' and containing 'a great number of PORTRAITS' including those of 'THE MOST EMINENT MEN of the FATHERLAND engraved by the best Dutch artists'. The faces in Blussé's *Handleiding tot de physiognomiekunde* (Guide to Physiognomy), which appeared in July 1780, several months after it had been promised, were indeed generally eminent and were without exception those of men whose features readers could subject to a careful analysis. One may, however, wonder precisely what such gentlemen as 'Judas, Gellert, Rabener, Young, Lavater, Socrates' and 'Voltaire' are doing in the company of a group of Dutch heroes like William of Orange, Bayle, the brothers John and Cornelius De Witt, 'two students, a Jew and a Jewess, a Jesuit and a monk'.⁶⁴

Of the two works, Allart's was reprinted and Blussé's was not,⁶⁵ from which we may infer that Allart won this round of the competition. No more advertisements for Blussé's *Handleiding* appear in the *Rotterdamsche Courant* after 30 July 1780. In 1781 he seems to have staked his money on another work that also capitalized on the growing interest in psychology at this time. *De mensch van zijner zwakke zyde beschouwd* (Man Considered from his Weak Side)⁶⁶ contained a list of sixty variants of humankind that a person may encounter in daily life—from 'the ham-fisted boor', the coward', 'the know-all', 'the reformer', 'the man from a former century', 'the man full of plans', 'the windbag', 'the chatterbox', 'the obsequious fawner', 'the miser' and 'the clumsy clot' to the 'man of taste, the educator and the witty writer'.⁶⁷

Psychology as a science in its own right was still in its infancy. Nonetheless, publishers of the time, even without the aid of psychologists or advanced marketing theories, still managed to have a very shrewd notion of some of the laws of buying and selling that were only identified in the twentieth century after considerable research.

⁶³ RC, 24 February 1780.

⁶⁴ RC, 13 July 1780.

⁶⁵ Allart reprinted the work on 'the very finest French writing paper'. Subscribers received the fifth volume of this 'costly' edition as a gift from the publisher (RC, 28 August 1781).

⁶⁶ RC, 30 June 1781.

⁶⁷ RC, 30 June 1781.

*'Promise is the Soul of Advertising'*⁶⁸

Booksellers' advertisements would usually be repeated several times—this, as the received wisdom today has it—is essential to maximize the effect. In advertising parlance this is known as 'wear in'.⁶⁹ An advertisement can apparently hold people's attention at least four times in a row. If we may go by the *Rotterdamsche Courant*, advertisers in the period I studied were also aware of the 'wear out'—after too much exposure the effect of sales promotion declines.⁷⁰ Advertisements were generally run two or three times.⁷¹

It was also recognized that an advertisement should always contain a promise, that is, that the consumer would benefit in some way. Many publishers' advertisements promised buyers a price reduction. Most special offers in the eighteenth century, however, did not refer to a price reduction but contained the veiled threat that the price would rise in due course. On 8 October 1776, for instance, when Pieter Blussé advertised a consignment of the ten-volume *Kweekschool der heel- ontleed- natuur- ziekte- artzenyschei- en vroedkunde* (Guide to Medicine, Anatomy, Physics, Chemistry and Midwifery) which he had taken over from another publisher, he warned that they would only cost 17 guilders a set until November but after that the price would jump to 25 guilders. He certainly appears to have stuck to his guns; his advertisement of 2 November 1776 announced that 'the books are available from the booksellers A. Blussé & Son for the rest of THIS DAY and under no circumstances for any longer'. This also sheds some light upon the promise made by Holtrop and Blussé that the price of their medical journal, *Genees-, natuur- en huishoudkundige Jaarboeken* (Yearbook of Medicine, Physics and Household Management) would, 'in view of its general benefit and daily diversion, not be increased'.⁷² The same company urges prospective buyers of the *Rym-Chronyk* (Rhyming Chronicle) by Melis Stoke to make their purchases before the end of the month because after that the price of the (so far) gratis prospectus would be taken into account in the price of the book.⁷³ And the offer of a free Dutch-English dictionary for those who bought the English-Dutch volume would appear

⁶⁸ The motto of advertising guru, David Ogilvy; H.T. Both, *Het reclame ABC. Praktische adviezen voor advertenties en direct mail op basis van onderzoeken* (De Bilt 1997) 21.

⁶⁹ Both, *Het reclame ABC*, 20-22.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, This corresponds to Jongelmann's observation, *Johannes Immerzeel junior*, 159.

⁷² RC, 15 July 1780.

⁷³ RC, 5 August 1780 and 24 February 1781.

to be an attempt to 'give away' something the customer had essentially already paid for.⁷⁴

The 'while stocks last' formula still used today was also common in the eighteenth century. In an advertisement that appeared on 5 February 1789, for instance, Johannes Allart stressed that he had reprinted 'a modest number of copies' of the sequel to the history of the Netherlands, *Vervolg op de Vaderlandsche historie van Wagenaar*, 'for the benefit of those who do not possess the work'. Those interested in owning the seventeen-volume quarto exposition of the Scriptures, *Verklaring van de geheele Heilige Schrift*, would be disappointed, since this edition, the publishers announced in the May 1768 issue of the literary periodical *Boekzaal*, is 'completely sold out' and 'everyone is requested to purchase the copies in folio that are still available as soon as possible, since their numbers are rapidly dwindling'.

It seems that the publishers were more generous with the twenty-first edition of Hellenbroek's *Kort begrip der Christelyke religie* (Short Exposition of the Christian Religion). It was announced that a thousand copies had already been sold, 'as a result of its quite general use by prospective members'.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, booksellers seldom quoted the size of their print runs to emphasize a book's popularity and thus promote sales. Literary periodicals were far more likely to use such figures to indicate a book's popularity. Sometimes the publisher left the location of the review vague, remarking only that 'those who leaf through this excellent work ... will agree with the best journalists that it is an incomparable treasure' or adding an inconspicuous NB to the effect that the 'work has been highly recommended both by German and Dutch journalists'.⁷⁶ In general, however, an advertisement provided not only the name of the journal in which a book had been reviewed, but often even specified the issue. The Amsterdam publishers, the Widow Van Esveldt and Willem Holtrop, announced in December 1776 'the outstanding work, highly recommended in the *Boekzaal* of October 1776 and praised by the eminent Professor Barkey of The Hague in a magnificent dedication to His Serene Highness William V of the Netherlands'. And the Haarlem publisher Bosch's references to 'the latest issue of *Boekzaal* and ... a previous issue of *Letteroeffeningen*' which contained a 'laudatory notice' of Schmidt's *Beschouwing van het wereldstel* (A Consid-

⁷⁴ RC, 2 April 1789. Apparently there was more demand for an English-Dutch dictionary than for its Dutch-English equivalent.

⁷⁵ This refers to a publication by Blussé (RC, 3 November 1781).

⁷⁶ RC, 16 November 1775: Pieter Blussé's advertisement for *De lydende Emmanuel*. RC, 24 July 1787: it refers to a book published by Vis titled *Heeren van Waldheim*.

eration of the World System), could not have puzzled interested readers for long.⁷⁷

Publishers kept a close eye on reviews of the books on their lists and exploited them in advertisements to impress their readers, as we see from the exhaustive summaries of reviews with which Blussé and his colleagues regularly regaled their readers. His publication on the history of teeth, *Historie der tanden*, is described as 'a work which the authors of the Bibliothèque des sciences, Journal Encyclopédique, Vaderlandsche Letteroefeningen and Nederlandsche Bibliotheek and most of the periodicals published at home and abroad have extolled and recommended as an essential work for all readers'.⁷⁸ This advertisement for a book which had already appeared a year earlier and had been extensively advertised at that time is also a good example of booksellers' tendency to use book reviews in a new advertising campaign. For example, Cramer's *Heilige bespiegelingen, gebeden en geestelyke gezangen* published by Blussé in 1778, was advertised again in 1780 after several reviews, including one in the literary periodical *Algemene Vaderlandsche letteroeffeningen* in 1779,⁷⁹ as a work 'highly recommended in the Boekzaal, Letteroefeningen and Bibliotheek'.⁸⁰ Not always, but in many cases, it was necessary to run a new publicity campaign in the light of book reviews. The time that elapsed between the publication of a work and its review by the critics could range from a couple of months to four years and, at least in the periodical *Vaderlandsche Letteroeffeningen* during the period 1817-27, averaged a year.⁸¹ Blussé was fortunate that his publication *De mensch van zyne zwakke zyde beschouwd* (Man Considered from his Weak Side) did not fall into the hands of an 'aspiring criticaster' guided by the following formula:

The reviewer must first confess
That two years ago, and no less,
He received the book in question,
But a thousand and one other chores
Gave his *scalpel* no moment's pause,
And left him not an hour to spend
On the work's *dissection*.⁸²

⁷⁷ RC, 2 May 1775. Schmidt, *Beschouwing van het wereldstel*.

⁷⁸ RC, 9 August 1774.

⁷⁹ AVLO 1779, part I, first article 344-46.

⁸⁰ RC, 20 July 1780.

⁸¹ J. Muis-van der Leun, *De uitgave van de Vaderlandsche Letteroefeningen* (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Utrecht 1988) 29. In order to anticipate events, publishers would refer to the announcement in periodicals that had generally already been made.

⁸² Cited in Muis-van der Leun, *De uitgave van de Vaderlandsche Letteroefeningen*, 28

Blussé's book on mankind, *De mensch van zyne zwakke zyde beschouwd*, was published on 30 June 1781 and advertised in the *Rotterdamsche Courant*; a review appeared—surprisingly quickly—in the November issue of *Vaderlandse letteroefeningen*. Blussé reacted without delay: on 10 November 1781 he placed an advertisement designed to create the impression of a review:

the writer of this work (in the opinion of the critics of *Letteroeffening*, in their article no. 11) outlines a vast array of characters whose originals we encounter in abundance in real life: he presents us with their excesses and eccentricities in the most lively manner; and attempts in this way to bring the reader to an awareness, so that he will himself shun such excesses, or arm himself against attacks of so contagious a nature. He employs a style ideally suited to demonstrating the absurdity of such faults, and is on the whole most successful in keeping his reader pleasantly entertained

Should the reader, having digested this information, still have any doubts as to the value of the work in broadening his cultural horizon, he could consult a number of other reviewers: 'For most favourable judgements the reader may consult the latest edition of Boekzaal and the Nederlandsche Bibliotheek no. 8'.⁸³

How much information would newspaper readers actually receive about the content of newly-published books? The question is all the more interesting in the light of the theory put forward by Kloek and Mijnhardt⁸⁴ that—lacking information about the growing numbers of new titles—the majority of eighteenth-century readers, who did not generally have a high level of literary education, would form reading clubs under the guidance of a literary expert. With the assistance of this guide through the literary landscape and in discussions with fellow-readers they would endeavour to improve their ability to make appropriate choices.⁸⁵ This theory assumes, among other things, that newspaper advertisements were too brief to provide sufficient information about a new book and that even in the second half of the eighteenth century the literary periodicals, then being published in ever greater numbers, failed to meet this need. The suggestion is that they were too expensive to reach a large readership. Furthermore, the reviews of newly-published works were often slow to appear and would have been too late to influence possible purchasers. Arguing against this, Gert-

⁸³ RC, 10 November 1781.

⁸⁴ See chapter 2.

⁸⁵ Kloek, *De lezer als burger*, 177-92; Kloek and Mijnhardt, 'Lezersrevolutie of literaire socialisatie?', 211-24.

Jan Johannes rightly points out that literary periodicals were sometimes published far earlier than it might seem if one were to go by the title page of the bound volume. The date on this page would be the year when the whole volume was bound as a book.⁸⁶ It is also evident from the newspaper advertisements that in many cases reviews did appear soon enough to play an immediate role in an advertising campaign or prompt a new one. The fact that eighteenth-century publishers saw a book review as sufficient reason to invest in more advertisements is a further indication of the influence these papers had on shaping the choices of the reading public. Since these advertisements frequently quoted from reviews, it seems reasonable to assume that this publishers' policy encouraged the content of literary periodicals to filter through to a medium with a much lower threshold: the newspaper. A broader and more in-depth study of the content of booksellers' advertisements might well reveal the extent to which texts that were not extracts from literary reviews were influenced in their tone by these literary journals. Did such phrases as 'this work, which should have a place in every Dutch book collection'⁸⁷ and 'this work is outstanding not only in its clarity of style and wealth of subject matter, but also in the references, after each account, to the authors from which the same was taken'⁸⁸ appear with the arrival of literary journals, or can we find them at an earlier date?

A comparison of the language of book reviews and that of book advertisements would also be useful in identifying the interests of eighteenth-century readers. Aside from the price and conditions of sale, the book advertisements in the *Rotterdamsche Courant* provide a great deal of information about the subjects treated by the works in question. This might take the form of an exhaustive list of exotic destinations for readers of Abbé de la Porte: Paraguay, Brazil, Monomotapa, the Cape of Good Hope, Angola, Congo, Loango, Benin, Ardra, Juida and the Gold Coast,⁸⁹ or a summary of historical events promising all the details of 'the wise policies of William I in the founding of the Netherlands Republic, the history of the 'Sea Beggars', the letter received by Admiral Lumey, the uprising of the burghers of Dordrecht and Rotterdam, the surrender of Flushing'.⁹⁰ Or, perhaps, a cabinet of curiosities such as the one collected in Michaelis's

⁸⁶ Johannes, *De barometer van de smaak*, 63.

⁸⁷ RC, 22 February 1781: advertisement by Blussé and Holtrop for the *Rym-Chronyk* (*Rhyming Chronicle*) by Melis Stoke.

⁸⁸ RC, 29 October 1789.

⁸⁹ RC, 20 August 1772: advertisement for De la Porte, *De nieuwe reiziger*.

⁹⁰ RC, 18 February 1775: advertisement for Barueth, *Hollands en Zeelands jubeljaar*.

Geleerde mengelschriften (Learned Miscellany) of 'five essays on memory; sheep-rearing nomads of the East; the power of the imagination in a mother and its influence on the unborn child; the age when the art of making fire had not yet been discovered; and on the antiquity of burning-glasses'.⁹¹ This tendency among booksellers to fill their advertisements with lengthy lists can be explained as a primitive method of advertising but may equally be interpreted as a reflection of the Readers' Digest nature of the interests of their readership.

On the basis of this often prolix but nonetheless superficial information, with the occasional reference to reviews and a short biography of the author to indicate his authority or popularity, the eighteenth-century reader had to judge whether the work being advertised would be to his liking. At the same time one may reasonably wonder whether present-day book advertisements, if and when they do appear, actually provide much more information.⁹² Furthermore, advertisements nowadays have to compete with a multitude of sources of information unknown in the eighteenth century. The *Rotterdamsche Courant* had just four pages, about a quarter of which were filled with booksellers' advertisements. If we are to believe the findings of research into the effects of advertising, those eighteenth-century advertisements must have had an immense impact. As a rule of thumb it would seem that 'the length of time spent reading advertisements when there are more than forty in the paper ... is far less than in papers with fewer than twenty (2 versus 6 seconds)'.⁹³

Even in the absence of such figures, it seems likely that two hundred years ago, when printed matter was relatively costly and much less common than it is today, readers would read every word in their newspapers. This was certainly what happened in elementary schools, where newspapers were pressed into service as teaching material.⁹⁴ We may deduce from correspondence between Abraham and Adolph Blussé, two of Pieter's sons who were involved in the publication of the *Dordrechtsche Courant* in the Napoleonic period, that the booksellers' advertisements in the papers, in

⁹¹ RC, 21 November 1772.

⁹² To put it bluntly: are we so much better informed today about available books? Literature is still a poor relation of mass media such as TV and radio. Essentially, we are still reliant on the same channels of information as eighteenth-century readers—reviews, prospectuses, advertisements, word-of-mouth recommendations and visits to bookshops.

⁹³ Both, *Het reclame ABC*, 22.

⁹⁴ E.P. de Booy, *De weldaet der scholen. Het plattelandsonderwijs in de provincie Utrecht van 1580 tot het begin der 19de eeuw* (Utrecht 1977) 288; Esseboom, *Onderwysinghe der jeught*, 226.

particular, were used in lessons. After it was decreed on 3 August 1810 that each département was permitted to produce only one political daily paper and that the rest might only continue to exist as advertising sheets,⁹⁵ the two brothers had to decide whether and, if so, how they should continue to bring out their newspaper. Abraham came up with the bright idea of keeping such a paper readable by giving greatest weight to the booksellers' advertisements:

If you hope to keep your advertising newspaper going solely with price-lists and advertisements, make them a quarter page, for instance, and ask only half the current price; further ... invite the booksellers in a circular letter to send in comprehensive advertisements detailing the contents of the works on their lists and encourage this by considerably lowering the prices, either of every line or of the 5th, 6th and subsequent, or of the 7th, 8th and subsequent.⁹⁶

We should not underestimate the information given in booksellers' advertisements, nor their influence. And the theory that eighteenth-century booksellers were not commercially-minded in the sense that they did not use aggressive advertising techniques requires some qualification.⁹⁷ Eighteenth-century publishers made shrewd use of contemporary events in their advertisements, seizing upon crazes among the book-loving public and making the most of the growing stream of literary reviews.⁹⁸ Overall the impression is not one of a passive book trade averse to aggressive advertising and confining itself to 'traditional, unvarnished announcements'.⁹⁹ On the contrary, it would seem that publishers used every means at their disposal to advertise their books—even exploiting to the full the limited design options available to them. To attract the reader's attention, they would use different fonts, capitals and italics, with blocks of asterisks, 'NBs' and inverted commas in the margins. There are, though, few traces of the sort of sophistication we find today—'The paper. He can't go a day without it' above a photograph of a tramp asleep on a park bench, wrapped in newspaper against the cold—in eighteenth-century advertisements. Games of this kind, which play with readers' expectation horizon, require a type of trained reader who was evidently still rare in the eighteenth cen-

⁹⁵ M. Schneider and J. Hemels, *De Nederlandse krant 1618-1978. Van 'nieuwstydyinghe' tot dagblad* (4th edition; Baarn 1979) 117-18.

⁹⁶ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 43, letter dated 16 May 1811.

⁹⁷ Klok and Mijnhardt, 'Negentiende-eeuwse leescultuur', 117-19.

⁹⁸ This development is related to the birth and spread of a culture of literary periodicals.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 117.

tury. One exception is the stunt pulled by the publisher Johannes Allart in the guise of a nun. In the newspaper of 6 January 1781 there was an advertisement supposedly placed by a certain Sister Kweselia, 'residing in Groenemarkt in Rotterdam', who informed readers

that on a recent evening, the 31st of December 1780, she found in [the avenue known as] the Boompjes an extremely fine book, written in the English language, titled *Dagboek van het Britisch Ministry*, from the beginning of the troubles in America up to the present time. Whoever has lost the same may apply to her.

An advertisement appearing a month later revealed that anyone interested in this little book, fascinating but written in English, may now acquire a copy in their own language without first having to knock at Sister Kweselia's door:

William Pan Secundus hereby announces that subscriptions for the diary of the British Ministry, translated from the English with plates drawn by Buis and engraved by Vinkes, will now proceed and that the first part will be published shortly. The subscription will take place at Allart's bookshop, and at every other bookshop in the Netherlands.¹⁰⁰

Part 1: Great Ambitions in a Small Market. A Diptych: Blussé and Holtrop

The Book to End All Books; the Failed Launch of an Eighteenth-century Dutch Encyclopaedia

It is 1777 and we are in a parsonage in the Beemster polder. Seated at her desk and flanked by bookcases as well-filled as is possible on a clergyman's meagre stipend, the writer Betje Wolff tries to imagine what Holland might be like in 2440.¹⁰¹ In her vision of the future, people can acquire knowledge freely, unhindered by an excess of information:

Now that people think more powerfully and more succinctly, for those whose profession does not permit a great deal of reading, a practical maxim-style collection of ideas, along with some brief principles of the sciences, has been compiled, followed by the names of those from whom these have been derived. Everyone has a small stock of favourite books, which for many people form an entity in themselves, including an annotated general list of

¹⁰⁰ RC, 3 February 1781.

¹⁰¹ P.J. Buijsters, *Wolff & Deken. Een biografie* (Leiden 1984) esp. 45-46. For further information about the contents of the bookcases, see R. Dijkstra-van Bakelen, 'De veiling-catalogus van maart 1789 op naam van Betje Wolff en Aagje Deken', *Documentatieblad werkgroep achttiende eeuw* 34/35 (1977) 123-48.

names that may be of use when borrowing books from the well-supervised public libraries, open to all, or when buying them in bookshops. There are special treatises to shed light on particular subjects, omitting anything that is not useful and with effective indexes.¹⁰²

More than two hundred years after this vision of the future—but still with a good four hundred years to go—we need to adjust the picture. The Utopian world sketched by Wolff, in which readers hasten to their local libraries with annotated lists of books in their pockets, is already in the past. In the twenty-first century every conceivable type of information can be acquired on the Internet, the ultimate ‘library without walls’.¹⁰³ Perhaps even Borges’s vision will soon become reality, albeit in a slightly different form: ‘When it was proclaimed that the Library contained all books, the first impression was one of extravagant happiness.’¹⁰⁴ One might wonder, however, whether having access to all available knowledge at the touch of a finger might not be a mixed blessing. As we can see from Betje Wolff’s Utopia, where useless information is banned and what remains can be accessed by means of indexes, people were already asking themselves this question in the eighteenth century. Her vision was inspired by a number of no less sensational developments in communications that had taken place in the course of the eighteenth century—rapid growth in the number of titles printed and associated changes in methods of book distribution, the rise in the number of literary periodicals, the number of public lending libraries and book societies, and the production of several bulky encyclopaedic works of reference with which people attempted to keep up with the ever-growing stream of new knowledge. A careful reading of some eighteenth-century authors reveals that the increase in new information—rather than inducing any feeling of euphoria—actually awakened a need to control this flood, to systematize it, to index it, to channel it and, if necessary, to destroy what was superfluous. That, at least, was Betje Wolff’s solution when she wrote about Holland in the year 2440:

The essence of who knows how many folios and thick quartos is found in a slim duodecimo. We have managed to produce a kind of fuel from all the works that have been rejected, and the multiple copies, which will keep us

¹⁰² [anoniem = B. Wolff], *Holland in het jaar 2440* (Hoorn 1777). This is a translation of Louis Sébastien Mercier’s, *L’An 2440*, adapted to the Dutch situation.

¹⁰³ See also R. Chartier, *The Order of Books* (California 1994) chapter 3, ‘Libraries without Walls’.

¹⁰⁴ J.L. Borges, ‘The Library of Babel’, in Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings* (New York 1964) 54.

supplied for several centuries. How many epic poems, epithalamia and other verses, in their gilded covers, have borne their heroes aloft in a thick cloud of smoke.¹⁰⁵

Books may also, of course, be torn up. The eighteenth-century journalist Pieter van Woensel thought that the vast quantity of books appearing on the market inevitably meant a diminution in quality. 'If the huge numbers of books had no other disadvantage than that they were torn up in groceries and other shops, it could go on. But just as a table overloaded with dishes causes one to lose one's appetite, so the surfeit of books diminishes the desire to read.'¹⁰⁶ In another Utopian vision, *Het toekomstend jaar drie duizend* written in 1792 by Arend Fokke Simonsz, the author also criticized the excessive number of books published then. In the year 3000 paper would no longer be wasted on ephemera as it was in his own time when 'thousands of books are typeset every day, bound within a few days, and sent into the world'.¹⁰⁷ Horace's advice 'nonum prematur in annum' (refrain from publication for nine years)¹⁰⁸ would be heeded in the world that he envisages and only 'well-considered books' would be published, so that, in contrast to the eighteenth century, the content would be far more important than the form:

for at the beginning of the nineteenth century taste had become so degraded that people asked not what use a book was, but in what font and on which paper it was printed.¹⁰⁹

The typical eighteenth-century phenomenon of the encyclopaedia—a multi-volume compilation of systematically or alphabetically ordered information on a wide range of subjects written for a quite general readership, not just for scholars—can be seen as a response to the need of citizens of the time to know 'not so much the most, as the best'.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Wolff, *Holland in het jaar 2440*, 9.

¹⁰⁶ Amurath-Effenci, Hekim-Bachi [=Pieter van Woensel]. *De lantaarn voor 1792* (2nd edition; Amsterdam 1792) 100.

¹⁰⁷ Arend Fokke Simonsz., *Het toekomstend jaar drie duizend. Eene mijnering* (Amsterdam 1792) 67.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., he cites here from a translation of Horace's *Ars poetica*.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 68.

¹¹⁰ Wolff, *Holland in het jaar 2440*, 9. Evidence of this may be found in the handwritten encyclopaedias that have been found in some private archives. A good example is the encyclopaedia that Lambert Engelbert van Eck compiled for use in his own family circle (A. Baggerman, 'Lezen tot de laatste snik. Otto van Eck en zijn dagelijkse literatuur (1780-1798)', *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse boekgeschiedenis* 1 (1994) 57-89, 75.

This is precisely the need that the Amsterdam publisher Willem Holtrop tried to meet in his prospectus announcing the first original Dutch encyclopaedia. The work, he promised, would be compiled in such a way that most of those who owned it would require no other book.¹¹¹ The marketing of Holtrop's 'Fatherland' encyclopaedia, particularly the difficulties he experienced in finding a market for this monumental work of scholarship, paints a vivid picture of the opportunities and limitations of the Dutch book market at the close of the eighteenth century. As we shall see, Holtrop's project never got off the ground. His teacher, friend and colleague Pieter Blussé, who began an advertising campaign for an equally prestigious reference work on Dutch industry at about the same time, fared rather better. Despite the obstacles Blussé encountered he managed, albeit by the skin of his teeth, to complete the series he had planned.

Holtrop's Encyclopaedia and its Predecessors

Holtrop was not the only eighteenth-century publisher to woo his public with the promise of a series that would make all other books superfluous. In 1786, the year he opened his subscription list, the market in the Netherlands was more or less saturated with encyclopaedias of all shapes and sizes. But most of these, even if not written in a foreign language, were of foreign origin. For instance, the eight-volume general dictionary of history, geography and genealogy by A.G. Luiscius, published between 1724 and 1737, consisted chiefly of entries translated from French and German reference works.¹¹² The same was true of Van Hoogstraten's seven-volume work of reference published in 1733.¹¹³ And for his ten-volume series on the arts and sciences, *Nieuw en volkomen woordenboek van konsten en wetenschappen*, published between 1769 and 1778, Egbert Buijs had resorted to English reference works. The reprint of N. Chomel's *Huishoudelijk woordenboek*, a reference book on household economy published between 1768 and 1778, is the exception. The first edition, published in 1743, was little more than a fairly literal translation of the French original. Thanks to the contributions by the well-read editor and publisher Alexander de Chalmot and three colleagues, however, the seven-volume reprint, published with his col-

¹¹¹ The notice to subscribers appeared in the periodical published by Holtrop and Pieter Blussé, *Algemeene genees- natuur- en huishoudkundige jaarboeken* (General yearbooks on matters of medicine, physics and household economy) (Amsterdam/Dordrecht 1786) vol. 3, part 1, 87-96, 92.

¹¹² *Het algemeen historisch, geographisch en genealogisch woordenboek* by A.G. Luiscius.

¹¹³ *Groot algemeen historisch, geographisch, genealogisch en oordeelkundig woordenboek*.

league from Leiden, Johan le Mair, contained so much original Dutch material and dealt with such typically Dutch topics that it became a separate entity. I shall return to this publication and its nine-volume sequel, also started in 1786, to examine the competition they presented to Holtrop's venture.

The other encyclopaedias and works of reference that were genuinely Dutch were not wide-ranging, as Holtrop intended his work to be, confining themselves to a specific field of knowledge. For medical information readers could consult R. Roukema's *Naamboek der beroemde genees- en heelmeeesters*, for domestic information there was J.H. Knoops's *Beschrijving van de moes- en keuken-tuin*, while those with an interest in heretics were provided for by Blussé's publication, *Alphabetische naamlijst der voornaamste ketteren*.¹¹⁴ Holtrop would have experienced far more formidable competition from the large French-language encyclopaedias then circulating in the Republic.¹¹⁵

The first volume of what is sometimes described as a monument to the Enlightenment, Diderot's 38-volume folio *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, was published in Paris in 1750. Immediate predecessors such as Bayle,¹¹⁶ Furetière and Zedler, working in the first half of the eighteenth century, could only call upon a handful of collaborators when compiling their encyclopaedias, whereas Diderot's *Encyclopédie* was the result of the efforts of 135 writers,¹¹⁷ among them such eminent Enlightenment scholars as Voltaire, Buffon, d'Alembert, d'Holbach and Rousseau. And, unlike these earlier works of reference, this encyclopaedia revealed an explicit social commitment. Many of the entries openly advocated economic, religious or political reforms. More even than the

¹¹⁴ P. Seebregts, *Geschiedenis van de alfabetische encyclopedieën ... in Nederland in de achttiende eeuw* (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Amsterdam 1969).

¹¹⁵ It was quite easy to obtain a set of Diderot's *Encyclopédie* in the Dutch Republic, as is instanced by the case of Isabella Sophia van der Muelen (1745-1781). Before her marriage she regularly bought volumes of the French *Encyclopédie*. Her problem proved not to be acquiring the books, but keeping them. The day after her marriage, her new husband, Jan Jacob de Malapert, sold all the cultural works she had so painstakingly collected (Judith Hokke, "Mijn alderliefste Jantielief". *Vrouw en gezin in de Republiek: regentenvrouwen en hun relaties*, *Jaarboek voor vrouwengeschiedenis* 8 (Nijmegen 1987) 45-74, 69).

¹¹⁶ Although Bayle had dozens of correspondents who provided him with information, books, opinions, roughs for articles etc., he wrote his *Dictionnaire* alone. H.H.M. van Lieshout, *The Making of Pierre Bayle's Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (Amsterdam 2001).

¹¹⁷ F.A. Kafker, 'The Encyclopédie in relation to the nine predecessors' in *ibid.* ed., *Notable Encyclopaedias of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* [= *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 194], 223-37, 223.

numerous passages of an anti-clerical, sceptical, deistic and even atheistic nature that filled this work,¹¹⁸ it was the underlying organizational principles that undermined traditional thinking.

In imitation of Francis Bacon, the writers of the encyclopaedia organized knowledge as a tree with many branches. But for them, unlike Bacon, philosophy was not a branch but the main trunk, on which 'revealed' theology appeared as a mere twig alongside 'superstition', 'soothsaying' and 'black magic'.¹¹⁹ It is consequently hardly surprising that this encyclopaedia met with far greater opposition from both church and state than previous publications of a similar nature. Several of the contributors and the editor were forced to flee abroad because of their activities. The leading publisher of the work, André François le Breton, spent time in gaol for illegally distributing the last ten volumes. Yet at the same time, this particular encyclopaedia proved a highly lucrative enterprise. Imprisoned he may have been, but Le Breton made a profit, in today's terms, of hundreds of thousands of dollars.¹²⁰ The Paris-based publisher Charles Joseph Pancoucke, who took over the copyright and the copper plates for the *Encyclopédie* from Le Breton in 1768, was not incarcerated—but many of his publications were. From 1770 to 1776 no fewer than 6,000 sets of the encyclopaedia languished behind bars in the Bastille.¹²¹ Still, Pancoucke had no reason to regret his part in the enterprise either. It appears from the print runs for the various editions that the book was the bestseller of the century. Darnton calculated that a total of 25,000 sets of Diderot's encyclopaedia, including the quarto and octavo editions, had been printed before 1789.¹²² For most of these editions Pancoucke was involved either as publisher or co-publisher.¹²³

This figure does not include the 1,600 copies of the rival 58-volume Swiss *Encyclopédie d'Yverdon* that was being sold in the Netherlands and some

¹¹⁸ Barker even concluded after a thorough analysis that the church had every reason to regard the encyclopaedia as an enemy of the Christian religion (J.E. Barker, *Diderot's Treatment of the Christian Religion in the Encyclopédie* (New York 1941) 125).

¹¹⁹ R. Darnton, 'Philosophers Trim the Tree of Knowledge. The Epistemological Strategy of the Encyclopédie' in *Ibid.*, *The Great Cat Massacre and other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York 1984) 217–42.

¹²⁰ Kafka, 'The Encyclopédie', 226.

¹²¹ R. Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment. A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie 1775–1800* (Cambridge, Mass./London 1979) 22.

¹²² 11,507 copies were distributed in France and 12,544 outside France.

¹²³ Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment*, 37.

neighbouring countries.¹²⁴ This encyclopaedia, published in quarto by F.B. de Félice from 1770 to 1780, was based on Diderot's work but contained so many substantive differences that it is regarded as an independent work. Assisted by a team of 33 writers, including eminent Swiss scholars like Albrecht von Haller, Charles Bonnet and Johann Albrecht Euler,¹²⁵ De Félice added a great deal of new information, deleted some entries or shortened them if the content seemed too much oriented towards the French reader, or simply too long-winded. Passages he deemed blasphemous were also cut from the Swiss version and replaced with more theologically 'correct' explanations.¹²⁶ In part because of its more moderate theological position, this encyclopaedia proved far more popular than the Paris work in the countries of northern Europe, including the Dutch Republic.¹²⁷ Darnton attributed the popularity of this particular version in the Dutch Republic to the identity and nationality of the distributor: the Hague bookseller, Pierre Gosse Junior. In 1771 he bought up the entire edition of the Swiss *Encyclopédie* and flooded the Dutch market and that of several other northern European countries with his acquisition.¹²⁸ When the publishers of a revised edition of the Paris *Encyclopédie* sounded out the potential Dutch market in 1778, they consequently met with total indifference. The response of the Murray Brothers of Leiden was typical of the rejections they received: they were, they said, 'encumbered with the Yverdon editions, the one in

¹²⁴ Ibid., 36. Interestingly, in his letter to W. Holtrop, F.B. de Félice gives exactly the same number as Darnton, although the latter based his information on other sources (KB, HS 133 L 29 dated 19 October 1786). For instance, on 24 May 1771 Gosse advertised this encyclopaedia in the Hague newspaper, 's *Gravenhaegse Courant*, hereafter abbreviated as HC.

¹²⁵ Jean-Daniel Candaux, 'Les "sociétés de pensée" du Pays de Vaud (1760-1790)', *Annales Benjamin Constant* 4 (1993) 63-73, 71-73.

¹²⁶ Foreword by De Félice in part 1 of his *Encyclopédie*. Diderot's *Encyclopédie* did indeed, as claimed in the foreword, undergo a metamorphosis in the Swiss version; this is apparent, for instance, in J. Lough, *Essays on the Encyclopédie of Diderot and D'Alembert* (Oxford 1968) 50.

¹²⁷ Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment*, 300-12; B. Paasman, *Het boek der verlichting. De 18e eeuw van A tot Z* (Bulkboek no. 156) 6. Donato adds that the Swiss version was not only more 'theologically correct' but also more up-to-date than the Paris edition, so the Yverdon edition was the most representative for the 'generation of 1770-80' ('Ainsi, pour la génération de 1770-1780, l'Encyclopédie d'Yverdon était la compilation la plus représentative') (C. Donato, 'L'Encyclopédie d'Yverdon et l'Encyclopédie de Diderot et de D'Alembert', *Annales Benjamin Constant* 14 (1993) 75-83, 77).

¹²⁸ Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment*, 19-20. Pierre Gosse also sold internationally, and as yet unknown number of copies of the work were distributed in Scandinavia, Germany, Poland and Russia; we may assume that not all 1,600 sets were sold in the Netherlands (Donato, 'L'Encyclopédie d'Yverdon', 75-83).

folio and the one in octavo'.¹²⁹ A Rotterdam bookseller summed up the situation in these words: 'The provinces are stuffed with encyclopaedias, neither the bookshops nor private individuals want to hear anything more about them... The price drops at every book sale where they appear.'¹³⁰

One might argue that it smacked of great courage when, less than ten years after this, the Amsterdam publisher Willem Holtrop and the Dordrecht publisher Pieter Blussé each announced a Dutch version of Diderot's project. In the spring of 1786 Holtrop advertised an *Encyclopédie* entirely adapted to the Dutch situation, and Blussé advertised a Dutch version of a major part of the French original: *A Complete Description of all Trades and Occupations*. Apparently they both detected a gap in the market for a Dutch-language, national version of the original French. By the time they started their advertising campaign in 1786, they already had ample experience of the national market for Dutch-language reading matter.

Pieter Blussé and Willem Holtrop: Parallels and Contrasts

Pieter Blussé and Willem Holtrop had known each other since they were boys. Willem also grew up in Dordrecht and he too probably gained experience in the book trade in his youth. His father, John Holtrop, was the official translator for the city and translated for various publishing houses, including A. Blussé & Son. In 1769, when the twenty-year-old Pieter returned to Dordrecht after his apprenticeship in Amsterdam, he took over both his father's bookshop and his father's apprentice: the seventeen-year-old Willem Holtrop. The latter, when he completed his apprenticeship in 1772, headed in the other direction, Amsterdam, where he met and married the daughter of the bookseller Steven van Esveldt, a partner of Jacob Loveringh. Through his marriage he became a partner in the publishing firm of De weduwe van Esveldt & Holtrop, and continued it solely under his own name after 1779.¹³¹ Like Pieter Blussé, Willem Holtrop soon became one of the leading booksellers and publishers in the Dutch Republic.

Pieter's dominant position as a book distributor has already been discussed in a previous chapter. Using the sales figures from Tijl's bookshop in Zwolle, we can compare the market position of the two publishers in

¹²⁹ Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment*, 311.

¹³⁰ 'Les provinces sont tellement farcies d'Encyclopédies que les libraires non plus que les particuliers ne veulent en entendre parler A chaque vente de livres ou il s'en trouvent, les prix déclinent.' Ibid.

¹³¹ *De nagedachtenis van wijlen Willem Holtrop* (In memory of Willem Holtrop) (Amsterdam 1835) 16-17.

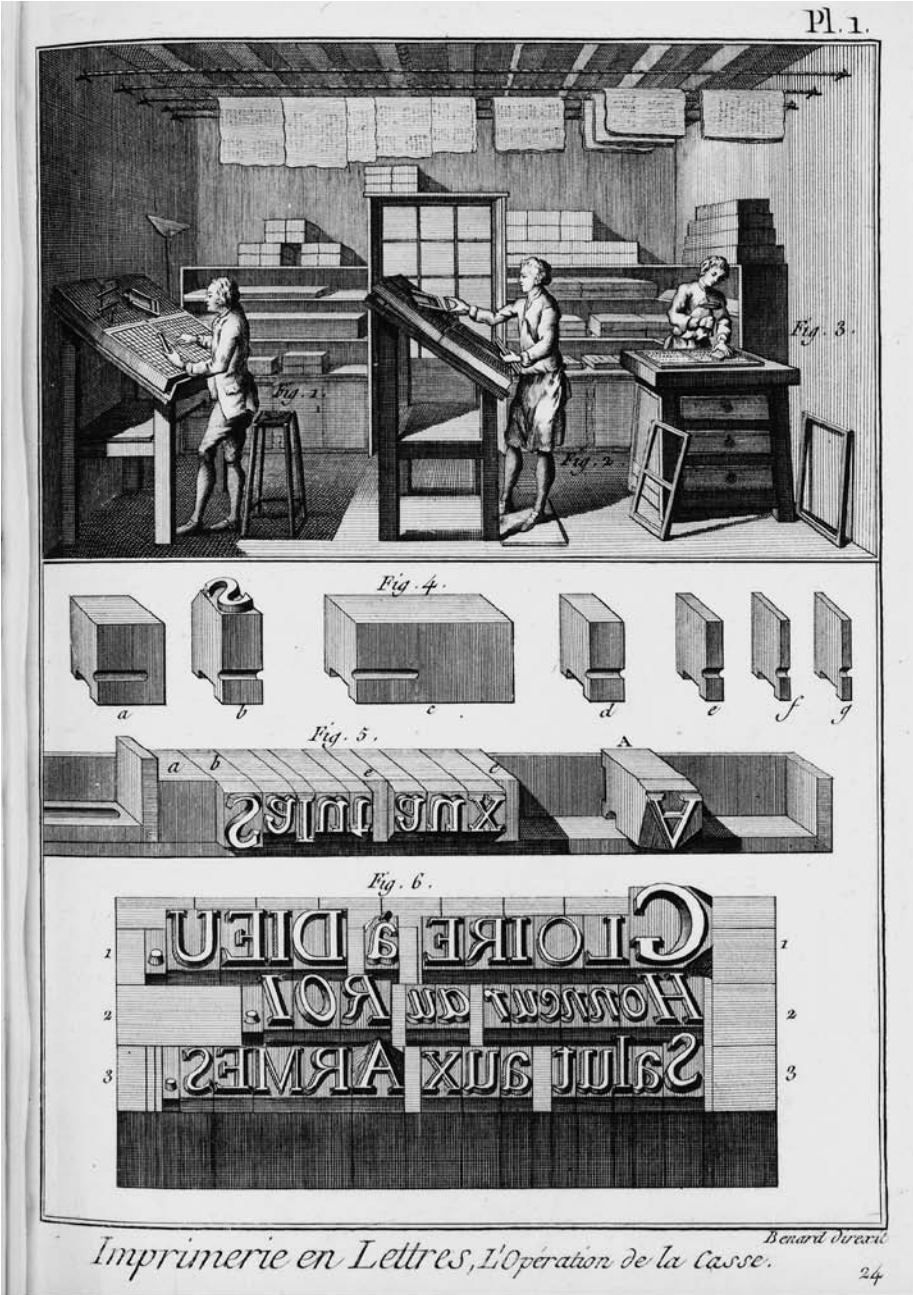
the 1780s. Between 1777 and 1787, both Holtrop, who supplied titles amounting to 257.83 guilders and Blussé with his deliveries to the tune of 210.83 guilders, were among the top ten suppliers to this bookseller.¹³² And when we consider their average annual output of individual titles during this period, the two publishers were well-matched—although Holtrop would appear to have been slightly more energetic. His annual production averaged about eleven titles as opposed to Blussé's ten.¹³³ Among them were religious steady sellers such as Blussé's reissues of Hellenbroek and novels like Holtrop's *De soldaat van fortuin* (The Soldier of Fortune) but there were also translations of famous Enlightenment scientific writings such as Blussé's new editions of Pluche's *Natuurlijke geschiedenis* (Natural History), to which he added an index, and Montesquieu's *L'Esprit des lois* published by Holtrop.

Some of their projects were joint ventures. In 1773, for instance, they brought out an edition of Marin's French dictionary revised by Willem Holtrop's father, John, and in 1780 they broke new ground by publishing a pioneering English textbook by the same author, followed in 1789 by his English dictionary. The contact between these two publishers was evidently not limited to business dealings as we see from an English inscription, written in 1789 by Willem Holtrop and addressed to Pieter Blussé's oldest son, Abraham Blussé Junior, on the flyleaf of the farewell speech Abraham gave on leaving the Dordrecht Latin School: 'Adieu to Mr. Abraham Blussé Junior, going to the University.' After which Holtrop quoted a few lines from a poem by William Mason: 'Go, go my dear young friend! compleat the rest,' which he offers Abraham 'as the sincere wish of my heart'. There are also signs of the friendship between the two publishers in the guest book of the Amsterdam society for radical Patriots *Doctrina et Amicitia*. Pieter Blussé's name was recorded on Friday 9 October 1783 as Willem Holtrop's guest.¹³⁴ This visit may well have marked the conclusion

¹³² During this period Blussé supplied titles for the sum of 210.46 guilders and Holtrop for the sum of 257.83 guilders. In splendid isolation, Allart heads the list of top ten publishers with a sum of 1,547.36 guilders. (My thanks to Han Brouwer for making this information available.) See also chapter 2.

¹³³ This amount is based on my reconstruction of Blussé's lists and the calculations made by N. de Pater, *Ga tot de boeken. Het fonds van de Amsterdamse boekverkoper Willem Holtrop 1751-1835*, appendix 1-81 (Unpublished Master's thesis, Free University of Amsterdam 1990). As De Pater did not identify individual volumes but only gave the titles of the full works, I have followed this method for the Blussé list.

¹³⁴ GAA, Doctrina et Amicitia Archive, inv. 255. With thanks to Eveline Koolhaas, who found this reference. For more about this society, see T. von der Dunk, 'Regeren is negeren. Of: de wederwaardigheden van het gebouw van Doctrina et Amicitia in de Amsterdamse



21. Depiction of typesetters in a printing establishment in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*. National Library, The Hague.

of a successful business meeting. Between 1778 and 1787 the two jointly published a bimonthly journal of popular science, the *Natuur, genees- en huishoudkundige jaarboeken* (Yearbooks for Physics, Medicine and Household Economy), which covered an immense range of topics—anything from the preparation of opium, curing tapeworm, learning how to swim, how to cross-breed cats with rabbits, how to teach the deaf-and-dumb to speak, remedies for rabies and hydrophobia, meteorological observations, the geography of Iceland, discussions about whether man was originally a quadruped or a biped, examples of miraculous phenomena that may be attributed to epileptic fits, to treatises on swans singing.¹³⁵ Subjects such as these were also treated in full-length monographs published by Holtrop and Blussé.

Despite all the similarities in Holtrop and Blussé's lists—travellers' tales, works on history and natural science—there are also a few noteworthy differences. While Blussé's list relied quite significantly on religious reading, we do not find any titles like these on Holtrop's list. He, in contrast, concentrated far more on 'new' genres: children's books and novels. The fact that Blussé's list was more enduring, in the sense that he managed to bring out several massive multi-volume works, sometimes published over several decades, must have resulted in part from his more conservative publishing policy. From a political point of view, too, Blussé steered a more cautious course. Both men published works coloured by the reforming ideas of the Patriots, but as a rule Holtrop's publications were more radical.¹³⁶ These stylistic differences between the two publishers are reflected in their approach to their ambitious projects to publish versions of the *Encyclopédie*.

Kalverstraat', *De achttiende eeuw* 30 (1998) 31-59. Willem Holtrop was also one of the founders of the society for radical Patriots, the *Vaderlandsche Sociëteit* (H. Reitsma, 'Genootschappen in Amsterdam en de revolutie van 1787' in T.S.M. van der Zee, G.M.M. Rosendaal and P.G.B. Thissen, eds., 1787. *De Nederlandse revolutie?* (Amsterdam 1988) 146-65, 147).

¹³⁵ See chapter 4.

¹³⁶ Some examples: J.H. Swildens, *Vaderlandsch A.B.-boek voor de Nederlandsche jeugd* (Amsterdam 1781); G.T. de Raynal, *Brieven over de regeeringsvorm en wetten der Vereenigde Staaten van Noord-America* (Amsterdam 1785); J. Priestly, *Brieven aan de Jooden* (Amsterdam 1787); *Nederlandsche Courant* (1783-1787) (after 1786 *Oprechte Nederlandsche Courant*, later in that year *Oprechte Nederlandsche NA-courant*; *Courier van Europa* (in association with Johannes Allart) (1783-1785).

The Rise and Fall of a Dutch Monument of Knowledge

Holtrop's project was unparalleled. In the spring issue of the periodical that he and Blussé published jointly, he announced a forty-volume encyclopaedia in quarto, with each volume numbering about 460 pages. The contents would not simply be translated from reference books which had already appeared in England, France and Germany, but would be specifically adapted to the situation in the Netherlands: 'Since I am not entirely unfamiliar with the contents of the English, French and German Encyclopaedias, I venture to claim that a bare translation into the Dutch from one or more of these works would be a very unsatisfactory undertaking, and for us would always be an inadequate work.' A great many Dutch writers and translators were invited to contribute, while 'the most famous and experienced artists in our country, such as Buys, Vinkeles, Bogerts, Brasser, Philips, Brouwer, De Wit, Saliét, Bendorp, Van Jagen, Schenk, Kloekhoff and others' would illustrate the work. The price of each volume was six guilders to subscribers, making a total of 240 guilders for the full encyclopaedia. This did not, however, include the separate volumes of plates: 'It is impossible to determine the number of plates in advance; all of them, however, will be completely new and each volume will be the same size as those in Yverdon's edition of the *Encyclopédie*. The price of each such volume will be twelve guilders to subscribers.' So as not to scare off subscribers with such high prices, Holtrop promised that if they wished they could delete their name from the subscription list within a month of the delivery of the first volume. After this month had expired, however, they would be obliged to buy the entire encyclopaedia, and to pay for each volume upon delivery. During this period a large number of advertisements for the encyclopaedia appeared in papers like the *Rotterdamsche Courant* and the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*.¹³⁷

We have no way of knowing how many readers actually saw Holtrop's advertisements and prospectuses, but it must certainly have been quite a few. The Haarlem paper *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* had a circulation of more than four thousand copies in the mid-eighteenth century¹³⁸ and in 1812 the literary periodical *Boekzaal*, where Holtrop also placed an

¹³⁷ OHC: 18 May 1786, 13 July 1786, 18 August 1786, 2 September 1786, 25 November 1786; RC: 13 May 1786, 17 June 1786.

¹³⁸ Johannes, *De barometer van de smaak*, 209; D.H. Couvée, 'The administration of the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* 1738-1742', *Gazette* 4 (1958) 91-110, 94.

advertisement,¹³⁹ had an average circulation of 1,650 copies.¹⁴⁰ As yet we know very little about the circulation of promotional prospectuses—which could be obtained free of charge at bookshops in the eighteenth century. The printers' ledgers belonging to Holtrop's colleague Pieter Blussé are of some help here.¹⁴¹ Blussé was far from miserly in the production of promotional material; the print runs of prospectuses he distributed free could be anywhere from 250 to 3,300 copies. But these figures do not tell us anything about who actually read the prospectuses. We do know about one reader—the publisher and editor of the Yverdon *Encyclopédie*, De Félice. The notice to subscribers was sent to him by his agent Pierre Giraud, who had come across the prospectus in Cologne.¹⁴² Although struggling somewhat with the Dutch language, De Félice was able to decipher enough of Holtrop's advertisement to send him some unsolicited advice: 'This, dear Sir, it seems to me, is the way to approach the matter.' The true purpose of the letter, however, was to put forward a number of business proposals.¹⁴³

De Félice's thinly-veiled agenda emerges on page one of the letter when, after a series of compliments and recommendations to Holtrop, he proffers his own suggestions for a revised edition of the Yverdon encyclopaedia. Along with the annotations made by the late Albrecht von Haller—'who was himself a living encyclopaedia'¹⁴⁴—and a large number of medical annotations, this package would cost Holtrop a mere 5,000 louis d'or. De Félice's services as an unpaid editor were included in the bargain. Were he to accept, Holtrop would only have to appoint a translator and call on the services of a small team of Dutch writers to add information specific to the Netherlands. Holtrop would also be able to stop worrying about the huge cost of the illustrated volumes for his Dutch *Encyclopédie*: De Félice offered him the original plates of the Swiss *Encyclopédie*—'because they could be used for another 1,500 to 2,000 impressions without being retouched'—for one louis d'or per plate, a quarter of the original price. Quite apart from the

¹³⁹ *Boekzaal*, October 1786, Notice to subscribers, 8.

¹⁴⁰ During the first ten years of the nineteenth century, the circulation of the *Vaderlandsche letteroeffeningen*, a sister periodical to the *Boekzaal*, averaged 1,000 copies (Muisvan der Leun, *De uitgave van de Vaderlandsche letteroeffeningen*, 109-15).

¹⁴¹ The only cashbooks to have survived are those recording the cost of typesetting; they run from 1797 to 1817. Due to their poor state of preservation they are not publicly available (GAD, FA Blussé, unsorted). See also chapter 6 for a further discussion of print run figures.

¹⁴² See a letter from Giraud to Holtrop dated 3 March 1787 (KB 133 L 29).

¹⁴³ Letter from F.B. de Félice to W. Holtrop dated 19 October 1786 (KB 133 L 29).

¹⁴⁴ He was said to have undertaken a thorough revision of the entries from A through E shortly before his death.

enormous savings this combining of forces would mean for Holtrop, there was another important advantage. De Félice spoke from experience when he stressed that such a mammoth work, whose separate volumes were closely connected with one another, had to be published fast. The longer the project dragged on, the greater the chance that subscribers might die before its completion, lose their money or withdraw their order for some other reason. Although he gave no hint of it in his letter to Holtrop, this was precisely what had happened to De Félice. A perfectionist, De Félice had spent so long editing and polishing his encyclopaedia that he lost part of his market to Pancoucke's cheaper quarto and octavo editions of Diderot's *Encyclopédie*. He also lost a considerable number of the original subscribers, who felt they were being put to unwarranted and unexpected expense when De Félice expanded his work to 58 volumes.¹⁴⁵ This debacle and the dire financial straits in which it left him was probably one of the reasons De Félice felt impelled to approach Holtrop and offer his notes and plates.¹⁴⁶

In the lengthy and detailed postscript to his letter to Holtrop, written after he had finally succeeded in finding someone to translate the prospectus into French for him, De Félice expanded on his argument about the pressure of time and suggested that by emphasizing the contributions of Dutch writers Holtrop would expose the new encyclopaedia to far too great a risk. While he was working on his own project he had been able to call on a large reservoir of scholars from all parts of Europe. This had not, however, prevented his having to continually take over or augment the work of contributors who were late with their articles. This did have one advantage, as De Félice sagely observed, in that the authors, fearful of losing their fee, would work more assiduously. De Félice had managed to complete his work within five years but if he had had to depend solely upon his authors, 'I would not have had the text ready for the press in 15 or 20 years.' As De Félice saw it, Holtrop's promise to work only with Dutch engravers would also endanger the project. And, considering the artists on Holtrop's list, the illustrations would be inferior to those in the Swiss *Encyclopédie* and cost him at least ten louis d'or apiece, whereas he could take over De Félice's plates for as little as one louis d'or each. And in conclusion, De Félice points

¹⁴⁵ Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment*, 24.

¹⁴⁶ Until now, historians have failed to comment on De Félice's remarkable manoeuvre. On De Félice's financial position at the end of his life, see E. Maccabez, *F.B. de Félice 1723-1789 et son encyclopédie* (Basel 1903) 16-17.

out what he considers to be a weakness in Holtrop's prospectus: 'Your title states that it deals with the *sciences humaines*; this suggests to me that you exclude from your encyclopaedia topics of a theological nature.' In De Félice's opinion, to neglect theological expositions in a work intended for the Dutch market, which was made up largely of clerics, would not be a clever move. 'The clergy in Holland are numerous and well able to afford your encyclopaedia, and they would be more likely to buy it if they expected to find it contained serious and well-considered theological writing.' Although he appreciated the difficulties of finding a good theologian for such a task, he did not consider it impossible to employ a Dutch theologian who would confine himself to writing a straightforward summary of religious practices without venturing into the quagmire of controversies and superstition. Upon which De Félice felt moved to reveal some of the awkward problems he had himself encountered. 'It is the only section that I feel is a failure in my encyclopaedia; first I had a bigot and after that a coarse-grained theologian.' He would have preferred to write these sections himself, but the pressures of time prevented him.

It is possible that De Félice was also unlucky in his choice of translator for Holtrop's prospectus. The proposed title, *Nederduitsche encyclopedie, of algemeen beredeneerd woordenboek van alle menschelijke kundigheden* (A Dutch Encyclopaedia, or General Annotated Dictionary of all Human Knowledge), indeed contained no specific theological reference, but the prospectus actually promised much information about religion in general and the Dutch Reformed Church in particular. Holtrop guaranteed that religious questions would be treated as objectively as possible since it 'does not chime with the nature of the work itself and far less with the aims that we have in view, to shape specific points of view or to defend such.' For this purpose he had gathered 'expert and eminent men' both from the 'Dutch Reformed Church and from other denominations in our country' who were prepared to contribute to the encyclopaedia. The articles would be 'in their type, either completely orthodox ... or in line with the theological point of view of the writer's denomination'. Although Holtrop—presumably with the same group of Protestant ministers in mind as had De Félice—made every effort to dismiss the impression that his encyclopaedia would be a battleground of conflicting theological opinions, if we read between the lines of his prospectus we do begin to suspect that this reference work would have caused quite a commotion. In a climate where the Dutch Reformed was virtually a state church, a thorough and objective treatment of all the world religions—in his prospectus he mentions that several rabbis

have agreed to contribute—implies quite a radical approach. The additional clauses, added between brackets in the notice to subscribers, would not have offered much consolation to the orthodox section of the Dutch nation. The promise that the work would be ‘honest and neutral’ should be interpreted, as far as religion was concerned, in the following way:

that every scholar is considered to have given his agreement to that which is completely in accord with his ideas or with the system of his church and to leave all the rest entirely to the responsibility of the author of the entry.

Orthodox ministers must have feared the worst when assured by Holtrop that all other encyclopaedias fell short in this respect, ‘although however it must be acknowledged on the other hand that the execution of all such subjects could not possibly take place in a safer country than our free Fatherland’.

De Félice was quite mistaken in thinking that Holtrop was going to dismiss religion from this publication—in fact, this prominent Freemason might well have been advised to do just that¹⁴⁷—but several of his other remarks about Holtrop’s publication hit the nail on the head. It is hard to imagine how Holtrop believed he could fill a forty-volume encyclopaedia with entries predominantly by Dutch scholars within the foreseeable future when an international and extremely erudite publisher like De Félice, using a far larger European network of authors, had only managed to complete his project by pulling out all the stops and contributing a great deal himself.¹⁴⁸ It is clear from a footnote that Holtrop added to his prospectus in the autumn of 1786 that questions had arisen concerning the feasibility of the project. He still neglected to reveal the names of the ‘great many professors’, the ‘most prominent Netherlandish statesmen and regents’ and the ‘various theologians’ who had promised their cooperation. He did, however, suggest how many would be involved:

Let no one suppose that this picture magnifies or is far from the truth. When they agreed to assist, more than *fifty* scholars in our fatherland gave the publisher permission to announce their names. Then, since an even larger

¹⁴⁷ Between 1791 and 1835 he was Master of the Amsterdam lodge *La Charité* (*De nagedachtenis van wijlen Willem Holtrop* (In memory of the late Willem Holtrop) (Amsterdam 1835) 36).

¹⁴⁸ For a long time scholars and men of science were greatly interested in Diderot and his colleagues—this is in striking contrast to the nebulous interest shown in De Félice. In recent years, however, scholarly interest in the role of this editor and publisher has increased noticeably, as reflected in a colloquium dealing with him and his encyclopaedia organized by the Benjamin Constant Institute in 1992 (*Annales Benjamin Constant* 14 (1993)).

number have not agreed that their names be made public, despite repeated requests, it was decided not to disclose any names at all, rather than only a small proportion of this list of authors.¹⁴⁹

Considering that De Félice worked with a 'modest' team of thirty-five correspondents and Diderot had to make do with 135, it seems likely that Holtrop was bluffing when he claimed he had already acquired a team of more than fifty scholars, who would remain anonymous. This lack of clarity may have sown the first seeds of doubt in the public mind; some were already dubious because they suspected they would encounter examples of theological free-thinking in the encyclopaedia. There was one more advertisement to attract subscribers, on 25 November 1786, offering a last chance to sign up 'until the end of this month'; thereafter this first all-Dutch encyclopaedia was never heard of again.

This disappointing outcome for Holtrop would have come as no surprise to the author and caricaturist Pieter van Woensel (1747-1808). In one of his drawings, Van Woensel pictures the Dutch reading public as a donkey, despondently carrying a stack of encyclopaedias.¹⁵⁰ Such splendid works were, in Van Woensel's eyes, so many pearls before swine. But it is too easy to dismiss Holtrop's failure by blaming it on a lack of interest on the part of the Dutch reading public. The expense of the volumes and the limited market in the Republic would have been a much greater obstacle. There were relatively few people in the Netherlands who could afford the phenomenally high price of at least 240 guilders. The bookseller Gosse had sold 1,600 copies of the French-language Yverdon *Encyclopédie* edited by De Félice, so much of this potential market had already been creamed off. Presumably this was one of the reasons why Holtrop never reacted to De Félice's suggestions. Even Holtrop could not have hoped to find a new market for more of the same—even if it were to be edited and in Dutch. Furthermore, having blazoned abroad in his prospectus that this would be a thoroughly Netherlandish production, it would be humiliating for him were he to produce—as De Félice had suggested—a revised version of the Swiss

¹⁴⁹ *Boekzaal* October 1786, Notice regarding subscriptions, 8.

¹⁵⁰ With thanks to Evelien Koolhaas who drew my attention to this illustration. Amurath-Effendi, Hekim-Bachi [= Pieter van Woensel], *De lantaarn voor 1792* (2nd edition; Amsterdam 1792) 103-17, after p. 102. Van Woensel may have intended this illustration as an explicit comment on Holtrop's doomed enterprise. It is clear that he knew Holtrop, from the handwritten dedication in a copy of *De lantaarn voor 1800* (ex. KB 519 L 26) which reads in Dutch, 'to young Miss Holtrop as a mark of esteem from the author Amurath'.



22. Pieter van Woensel's view of Dutch readers of encyclopaedias. National Library, The Hague.

encyclopaedia, containing a little Dutch local colour.¹⁵¹ Holtrop's readers would have had to be newcomers to the book market, connoisseurs who prided themselves on having in their libraries encyclopaedias in both French and Dutch, or wealthy citizens who did not read French.

This latter group of prospective buyers, however, probably already owned the *Algemeen huishoudelyk-, zedekunding- en konstwoordenboek*, edited and published by J.A. de Chalmot, covering such topics as household economy, physics, moral philosophy and art history. True, this work had originally been translated from the French and was certainly not produced on such a grand scale as Holtrop's proposed magnum opus, but it had been considerably expanded with countless specifically Dutch matters and articles by Dutch authors.¹⁵² In the entry for earthenware, for instance, there is an explanation of how Delft pottery is produced, while 'alms' are evoca-

¹⁵¹ He may have considered this option and decided to take a break, planning to return when his earlier plan had been forgotten by Dutch readers, with the completely different and far cheaper version suggested by De Félice. But if he had such plans, they were thwarted by De Félice's death on 13 February 1789.

¹⁵² Noël Chomel, *Algemeen, huishoudelyk-, natuur-, zedekundig- en konstwoordenboek, vervattende veele middelen om zyn goed te vermeerderen en zyne gezondheid te behouden* (2nd edition; 7 vols. Leiden/Leeuwarden 1778); J.A. de Chalmot, *Vervolg op M. Noël Chomel Algemeen (...) konst-woordenboek* (9 vols. Campen/Amsterdam 1786-1793).

tively defined with the aid of a quote from the Dutch author and journalist Justus van Effen. The entry on the uses of vinegar cites Dutch scholars like Boerhaave and Diemerbroek. Four columns are devoted to Dutch customs like a national day of prayer, likewise to explaining games like knucklebones, the novelty tankard¹⁵³ and typical Dutch sayings.¹⁵⁴ One of these, to do with the clever use of one's resources, may have inspired De Chalmot in 1784 to remainder the first seven volumes—published between 1767 and 1778—before printing the subsequent volumes. In 1784, Holtrop's *Nieuwe genees- en huishoudkundige jaarboeken* (New Medical and Household Economy Yearbooks) published a lengthy advertisement offering the remainders of the complete work at a reduction of roughly forty percent.¹⁵⁵ For the sum of 45 guilders people were able to purchase the complete set of the encyclopaedia (there was no mention of a sequel). When De Chalmot advertised a newer series of supplementary volumes in 1785 and 1786,¹⁵⁶ potential buyers would have been more inclined to subscribe to these than to Holtrop's new encyclopaedia.¹⁵⁷ Also, by printing the first sections of the sequel in advance, which were highly commended by the critics, De Chalmot was able to create greater enthusiasm for his—far more modest—project. Not surprisingly a later review published in September 1786, when the first volume of the sequel was completed, emphasized

¹⁵³ *Hansje in de kelder*: a stemmed beaker with a small flap at the top of the stem, which would open when the beaker was filled with liquid. As it opened, a tiny naked baby emerged; such beakers were used for drinking toasts to pregnant women (Chalmot, *Vervolg* IV, after p. 2800).

¹⁵⁴ This is a reference to the explanation of a well-known Dutch saying, '*botje bij botje*' (Chalmot, *Vervolg* I, 642).

¹⁵⁵ *Nieuwe genees- en huishoudkundige jaarboeken* (Amsterdam/Dordrecht 1784) 4th vol., second section, 4.

¹⁵⁶ The first section of the first part was published in 1785 (see AVLO 1785 p.608) and RC, 16 February 1786. The subscription period closed at the end of November 1786 (RC, 9 November 1786).

¹⁵⁷ It is evident that even those buying this less expensive version of an encyclopaedia were among the wealthiest citizens, as appears from research into the inventories of estates (and in this case the listed books) in The Hague and also research into the client lists of Tijl's bookstore in Zwolle. Two people who owned Chalmot's *Huishoudelyk... woordenboek* were found in the inventories. They were Countess Anna Boud, widow of Willem Jan van Hogendorp, listed in the second-from-highest income group, and Dominicus Cornelis Roosmale, belonging to the highest income group. Tijl's bookshop sold this work to eight different customers during the 1778-83 period. Half of these clients belonged to the aristocracy, two to the higher bourgeoisie, one to the respectable bourgeoisie and one to the middle class. (I am grateful to José de Kruif who kindly made available to me her studies of eighteenth-century estate inventories from The Hague, and Han Brouwer who showed me the figures he had collected from Tijl's customer records.)

strongly that De Chalmot's 'diligence, supported by his promoters ... [means that there is] a good prospect that this work (which is an entirely Dutch encyclopaedia) will soon attain its completion'. The fact too, that the work was largely the product of one man—he only had three collaborators—will have increased public confidence in the feasibility of such an undertaking:

The more so, since, according to his notice of subscription, he has already been collecting and working on a supply of information with all diligence and assiduity for many years.¹⁵⁸

We may perhaps wonder whether this small team of collaborators was a deliberate decision on De Chalmot's part or the result of difficulties he encountered in recruiting suitable authors—the problem De Félice foresaw for Holtrop. In the closing words of the introduction to the first seven volumes of the *Huishoudkundig woordenboek*, De Chalmot concludes the introduction of his colleagues—Petrus Camper, Augustus Sterk and J.H. Knoop—with a somewhat bitter remark:

With the exception of these gentlemen ... I have had no one to help me in this important work, except, however, in the articles Notary, Substitution, Testament.¹⁵⁹

Over twenty years later, in a letter to Heinemeyer, a German engaged in compiling a Dutch biographical reference book, De Chalmot has more to say about the lack of enthusiasm for this type of book among the Dutch reading public:

I cannot do otherwise than commend to the utmost your intention to publish a book of reference dealing with the Scholars and Writers of our Commonwealth ... I fear, however, given the present circumstances and especially the small encouragement that, here at least, one receives for one's enterprises, that sales here will be very poor.¹⁶⁰

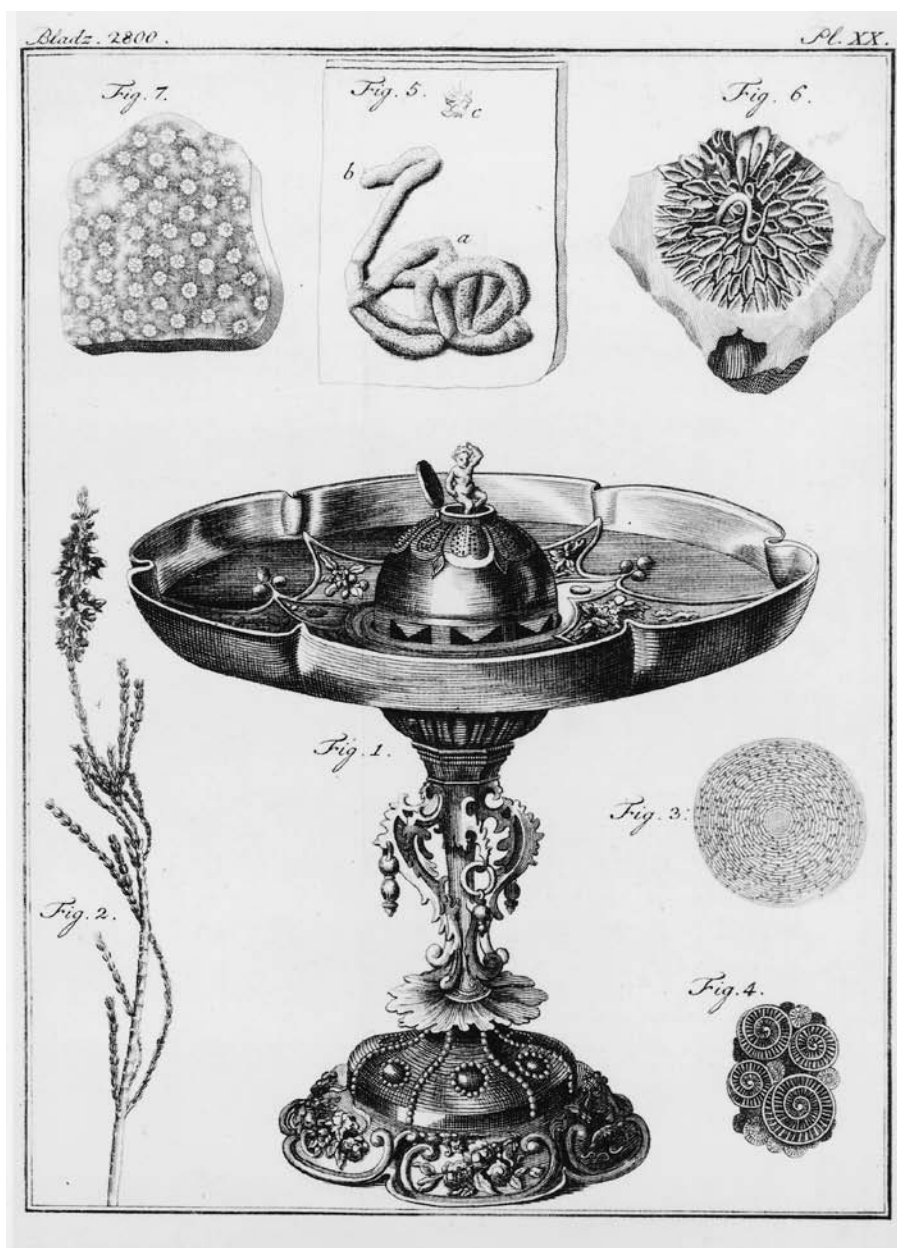
It is not difficult to understand De Chalmot's disappointment if we compare the number of subscribers for the first seven volumes of his work, with that for the *Vervolg* (Sequel). While the first series attracted some 1,000 subscribers, there were just 375 for the Sequel, which commenced publication in 1786,¹⁶¹ and this despite the excellent reviews the book received.

¹⁵⁸ *Boekzaal*, September 1786, 288.

¹⁵⁹ ESP. Chomel, *Algemeen woordenboek* I (7 vols. Leiden/Leeuwarden 1767-1777) p. XVI.

¹⁶⁰ UBL, Ltk 1001, letter Chalmot dated 26 August 1800.

¹⁶¹ The edition was to have been 1,500 copies (C.N. Fehrmann, 'De drukker, uitgever en auteur Jacques Alexandre de Chalmot', *Kamper almanak* (1964-1965), 256.



23. 'Hansje in de kelder' drinking cup, in J.A. de Chalmot, *Vervolg op M. Noël Chomel Algemeen ... konstwoordenboek*. National Library, The Hague. When this cup is filled, the figure of a baby appears. De Chalmot reports that it was customary in Holland to use this cup to toast pregnant women. A similar cup is still in the possession of the Blussé family.

All things considered, it seems that Holtrop's aim of publishing a work that would rival its famous French predecessor and would be far more comprehensive than De Chalmot's was far too ambitious for a country as small as the Netherlands: there were simply too few Dutch speakers and readers.¹⁶²

If Willem Holtrop had been a mere novice in the publishing world or perhaps an eccentric figure whose projects had previously shown signs of delusions of grandeur, his miscalculation would need no explanation. But, as we have seen, he had been in the business for sixteen years, specializing in the home market for Dutch literature—and had been extremely successful. Part of the explanation must thus be sought in the mental climate of the 1780s. It can be no coincidence that Willem Holtrop's ambitious plans, like those of his Patriot fellow-publishers De Chalmot¹⁶³ and Pieter Blussé, took shape in 1786, the year the Dutch Patriots gained political power. After the stadholder was publicly humiliated in March 1786 and a number of city councils had replaced the former aristocratic regents with new men, it seemed as if even the impossible could come to pass. But in 1787, when the Orangists seized power again with the aid of foreign troops, everything changed once more. Not only was Holtrop's encyclopaedia dead in the water but the euphoria of the Patriots was snuffed out. In the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth, the Dutch Republic had been a refuge for persecuted French intellectuals, but now the situation was reversed. A sizeable group of Dutch radical intellectuals—among them the writer Betje Wolff—went into exile and sought refuge in France.

Holtrop's miscalculation may have been compounded by a hazy view of the economic realities of the late eighteenth century with which many of his contemporaries were also faced. Disappointed by the relative economic decline during these years, people hoped that by changing attitudes—a 'return' to a more moral nation of hard-working Fatherlanders¹⁶⁴—they could breathe new life into the seventeenth-century Golden Age. The *Oeconomische Tak* of the Holland Society of the Sciences, which promoted mercantilism and attempted to persuade wealthy citizens to invest their capital in national commerce and industry, was a

¹⁶² This corresponds with the conclusions reached by G.J. Johannes who states that in the second half of the eighteenth century Dutch-language newspapers were necessarily general, because the small market did not have the scope for specialism and polarization (Johannes, *De barometer van de smaak*, 194-199).

¹⁶³ Fehrmann, 'Jacques Alexandre de Chalmot', 249.

¹⁶⁴ See Kloek, 'Letteren en landsbelang', 81-95.

more pragmatic organization.¹⁶⁵ But the *Oeconomische Tak* also made the mistaken assumption that internal factors were to blame for the economic decline. They forgot that the miracle of the seventeenth-century Golden Age, when the Dutch Republic was a powerful centre of commerce, was largely due to external influences.¹⁶⁶ When the unfavourable circumstances elsewhere improved, the Republic lost its 'artificial' lead and became increasingly dependent on its domestic market. This certainly applied to the book trade. Publishing firms operating on an international scale, such as Elzevier and Blaeu, now gave way to a new crop, the so-called Holland publishers, such as Holtrop and De Chalmot, who began to explore the home market more intensively.¹⁶⁷

Seen against this backdrop, Holtrop's plan to publish a Dutch encyclopaedia may be considered as the attempt by a new type of publisher to explore the boundaries of an uncharted market. Quite possibly he was misguided not only because of the kind of notions then prevalent in the *Oeconomische Tak* but also by the expectation of finding a new market among those who supported the movement for economic recovery. This fast-growing society reached its peak in the 1780s when Holtrop launched his encyclopaedia.¹⁶⁸ Holtrop may have gambled on the hope that this group of well-to-do citizens would be eager to invest in the cultural values of their Fatherland by subscribing for a work of reference that promised to equal the famous publications in England, France and Germany. It is no coincidence that Holtrop's prospectus emphasized this aspect of the work, just as his hints about prospective patrons seem to have been part of a deliberate strategy of playing on nationalist sentiments.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Holtrop once again advertised in the financial newspaper, the *Oeconomische Courant*, the mouthpiece of the by then virtually defunct *Oeconomische Tak*, announcing a

¹⁶⁵ See Joh. de Vries, *De economische achteruitgang der Republiek in de achttiende eeuw* (2nd edition; Leiden 1968); Ibid., 'De Oeconomisch-patriottische beweging', *De Nieuwe Stem* (1952) 723-730; J. Bierens de Haan, *Van Oeconomische Tak tot Nederlandsche Maatschappij voor Nijverheid en Handel 1777-1952* (Haarlem 1952).

¹⁶⁶ See chapter 2.

¹⁶⁷ There can be no question that the international book trade operating in the Dutch Republic received a number of serious blows in the second half of the eighteenth century. See also Kloek, '1 januari 1790', 388-95; Mijnhardt, 'De geschiedschrijving over de ideengeschiedenis van de 17e- en 18e-eeuwse Republiek', 175; G.C. Gibbs, 'The role of the Dutch Republic as the intellectual entrepôt of Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' in *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 86 (1971) 323-49.

¹⁶⁸ See chapter 3.

Dutch encyclopaedia; this time he seems to have estimated the Dutch market more realistically.¹⁶⁹ He announced a new edition of the three-volume 'dictionary' containing 'generally useful information for daily life about politics and agriculture, as well as household economy', a work containing 'more than 2,000 pages, printed in small type in large duodecimo' which, he claimed, would compensate 'many people' for the lack of the very extensive *Huishoudelijk woordenboek* by Chomel; indeed, this may be considered a small version of Chomel. In an earlier advertisement particular emphasis was placed on the compact nature of this new work and the fact that it was such excellent value for money:

If city dweller and countryman, if mothers and fathers are eager to learn for little money—for the entire work costs no more than 2 guilders per part—many things, indeed all they need to know of easy, pleasant and advantageous information about trades and occupations, business, craft and household economy, they should buy this work, of which nearly 3,000 copies have already been sold.¹⁷⁰

Holtrop's forty-volume original and innovative Netherlandish Encyclopaedia had shrunk to a three-volume reprint—even promoted as a 'compact Chomel'—of a small work his father-in-law had brought out more than thirty years before.¹⁷¹

Holtrop's colleague Pieter Blussé's plans for a reference work on trades and crafts, much more directly inspired by the *Oeconomische Tak*, did not suffer the same ignominious fate. All twenty-four volumes promised to the public were in fact published. However, it took somewhat longer than expected before the entire series saw the light of day.

¹⁶⁹ *Oeconomische Courant* dated 3 December 1800 no. 174, 143.

¹⁷⁰ *Oeconomische Courant* dated 20 August 1800 no. 159, 23.

¹⁷¹ The title was published by Willem Holtrop in 1794. A comparison of the content and the typesetting confirms that this was indeed a reprint of the second edition of *De burger-boer, of land-edelman, zynde een beknopt zak-woordenboek van het buiten-leeven* published by Steven van Esveldt in 1766, and not a new title. This reference work provides detailed descriptions of agricultural crops, agricultural machinery, vegetables, herbs, recipes and household remedies, and also defines and explains legal terms and practices. Holtrop probably brought his third edition to public attention again in 1800 in response to a rival publication by the Amsterdam publisher Johannes Allart. Between 1800 and 1802 Allart brought out a four-volume dictionary of household economy for town and country-dweller, which he likewise presented as an abridged version of Chomel's reference work.

Part 2: Long Haul: Blussé's Complete Description of Trades and Occupations

According to the information Blussé published in his prospectus advertising his new encyclopaedic work in 1786, buyers would be able to purchase the complete set of between twenty and twenty-four volumes for as little as fifty to sixty guilders. This was far less than subscribers would have to fork out for Holtrop's encyclopaedia, advertised in the same year, which would cost at least 240 guilders.¹⁷² Of course, Blussé's work was not an all-embracing encyclopaedia like Holtrop's, but a series based on a section of the French *Encyclopédie*: the description of trades, crafts and manufacturing techniques.¹⁷³

Compilers of encyclopaedias in this period were fired with the desire to make the world around them as clear and comprehensible as possible, so they attached immense importance not only to philosophy, religion and politics but also to increasing and disseminating knowledge of practical matters. Their encyclopaedias consequently contained a significant number of entries on technology and exact sciences. This emphasis is all the more evident in the volumes of illustrations, which were largely given over to impressive engravings of workshops, machinery and tools. Diderot and some of his assistants did not confine themselves to the academic approach—in fact they had little choice in the matter, since there were few if any printed sources on such things—so they visited studios and workshops and asked the artisans about the techniques they used.

These *encyclopédistes*, as they are known, were not in fact the first to devote themselves to collecting technical knowledge. When Diderot first began publishing his *Encyclopédie*, members of the French Académie Royale des Sciences, among them the physicist René-Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur and the agricultural expert Henri Duhamel du Monceau, had already been engaged in generating information about the production

¹⁷² This prospectus is bound into the August issue of *Boekzaal* (1786) with its own title page and separate pagination. It is evident from the note to the binder below the contents page that the best place in the journal to bind this advertisement had been carefully considered. It read: 'The Notice from A. Blussé and son must follow the Economic Branch competitors.' ('Agter de prysvraagen van de Oeconomische Tak, moet volgen het Bericht van A. Blussé en zoon.') The same advertisement, but this time numbered as part of the journal, is included in Blussé's own periodical, the yearbooks *Algemeene genees- natuur-, en huishoudkundige jaarboeken* IV, 2nd number, 1786, 69–82.

¹⁷³ An article on this series written by L. Buijnsters-Smets, 'De "volledige beschrijving van alle konsten, ambachten" enz. (1788-1820)', appeared earlier, *Antiek* 13 (1978/79) 471–84.

methods then used in France for more than half a century. This project had originally been initiated by Louis XIV's minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert, who wanted to encourage technological innovation in France. In fact, the results were not published until the second half of the eighteenth century. Under pressure from Diderot's rival project, it was decided to abandon the ideal of a thematic encyclopaedic work, which was due in part to the delay. In 1761, four years after the author's death and ten years after the publication of Diderot's first volume came the publication of De Réaumur's *Art du charbonnier* (The Charcoal-Burner's Trade), as the first part of the series of descriptions of trades and occupations, *Description des arts et métiers*. After the Académie's 'repositories' had been emptied and a great many scholars had been commissioned to prepare De Réaumur's manuscripts for the press and write supplementary parts, things moved fast. By the time Pieter Blussé announced a similar series in Dutch adapted to the situation in the Netherlands in his prospectus of 1786, the series of monographs published by the Académie already ran to 99 volumes, dealing with subjects as diverse as the production of pins, knives, hats, wigs, pipes, rubber balls, Turkish baths and locks, the operation of coal mines, shipbuilding, sugar refining and textile manufacture.¹⁷⁴

In his prospectus, Blussé made no secret of his admiration for the inspired nature of the French work—for its vitality, its thoroughness, and in particular for the way in which the French academics had not hesitated to descend from their ivory towers into the realities of the everyday life of artisans and labourers.

They did not consider it beneath their dignity to visit the workshops in the factories, the benches of the craftsmen, carrying out their investigations, consulting the artisans themselves, enquiring of them the different names and technical terms that they used, observing closely and comparing the way the work was performed and applying their own informed knowledge and experienced insights in order to apply improvements to what they had seen.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ On the original intentions and history of the work *Description des arts et métiers* see A.H. Cole and G.B. Watts, *The Handicrafts of France as Recorded in the Description des Arts et Métiers 1761-1788* (Cambridge 1952) and J. Moseley, 'Illustrations of typefounding engraved for the Description des Arts et Métiers of the Académie Royale des sciences, Paris, 1694 to c. 1700', *Matrix* 11 (1991) 61-80.

¹⁷⁵ *Algemeene genees- natuur-, en huishoudkundige jaarboeken* IV, 2nd number, 1786, 70.

His criticism, in other words, was not of the contents but of the implementation. He thought it was too expensive and consequently felt that the publication partly missed its target—to disseminate useful information as widely as possible. Blussé promised that his publication would be on a more limited scale than its French example and that he would ensure that ‘craftsmen or artisans of limited means’ would also be able to afford the separate volumes.¹⁷⁶ To this end he decided to use the much cheaper octavo size rather than the expensive folio format used by the French book. He would also avoid redundancy, reduce the number of volumes by three quarters, make the type appreciably smaller, and make the type page more economical by printing in columns. The French Academy, Blussé emphasized, had realized too late the mistake it had made in this respect. At the last moment, when the majority of the series had already been printed, they had tried to economize, but it was too late to alter a number of design aspects, such as the format. Pieter had learned from his French predecessors’ mistakes and was thus able to set up his series on a much sounder basis.

Since we are now able to follow in their footsteps from the beginning, and take advantage of the accurate comments made by the Academicians in the period in question, our intention now is, if we may express it in these terms, to set about it truly economically, that is, to deliver good merchandise but at the lowest possible price.¹⁷⁷

He did not intend simply to translate the work from the French but rather ‘to prune away what is superfluous and follow the main outline’ while making use of similar works that had meanwhile been published in England, Germany and Switzerland.¹⁷⁸ In addition, he would consult manufacturers and tradesmen in the Netherlands and use their knowledge to strengthen his series.

Since the Dutch books were to focus on the economy of the Netherlands, Blussé planned to select from the French series business sectors that were relevant to the Netherlands. He would not, however, confine himself solely to trades and occupations already found in the Dutch Republic. Entirely in line with the principles of the *Oeconomische Tak*, which sought to strengthen the economy by stimulating new industries, he also regarded activities that ‘can be undertaken in the Republic with some prospects for

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 77.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 78.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

the future' as important to his series.¹⁷⁹ Echoes of his engagement with this movement can be heard in his recommendation, designed to attract customers, of the series that had contributed 'not a little' to the flourishing of the economy in France.¹⁸⁰

Over the past few years these same manufactures and products have been more sought-after than ever in all the markets of Europe, and trade in the same has increased substantially at the expense of that of other nations ... This being so, what Dutchman does not desire, with us, to take advantage of others' progress in these areas?¹⁸¹

Blussé then went on to treat the reader to a page-long exposition on the weak state of all sorts of Dutch trades and industries which, he said, would also impact on commerce and shipping. He argued that the growing competition from abroad was only partly responsible for this. The decline could be attributed in equal measure to internal developments and attitudes.

The increasing affluence and ill-judged taste, arising first out of a longing for novelty and then out of imitation and a desire to be à la mode, that causes us to value the foreign above the home-produced, has generally perverted the spirit of industriousness, diligence and invention and effectively put an end to all public and particular stimulus.¹⁸²

Thanks to the efforts of several societies, including the *Oeconomische Tak*, attempts were made to reverse this trend. Blussé asserted that this series was his way of contributing to the economic recovery of the Netherlands.

And who can take exception if we feel that it is our task to contribute to the general good, according to our ability and opportunity and thus assist the aforementioned Societies? In our estimation, now, when the spirit of industry and affection for our beloved Fatherland and all that may bring it

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 79. If we compare the 68 topics that Pieter selected from the French version with the books that he finally published, it is clear that he really did produce a more compact work. Where the French series has separate entries for the 'wax maker' and the 'candle maker' these are combined under one heading in the Dutch version. The same is true in other instances—in the *Complete Description* the French leather gilder, chamois leather maker, tanner, 'Spanish leather' maker and 'Hungarian leather' maker are all lumped together under the heading 'the leather tanner'. Pieter's selection of industrial branches could be interesting to economic historians. Among the trades he did not include in his series, for instance, were the charcoal burner, the anchor smith, the pin maker, the blacksmith, the slater, the wig maker, the Turkish bath owner, the saddler, coal mining and shipbuilding.

¹⁸⁰ See chapter 3. At this time Pieter Blussé was secretary of the Dordrecht section of the *Oeconomische Tak*.

¹⁸¹ *Algemeene genees- natuur-, en huishoudkundige jaarboeken* IV, 2nd volume, 1786, 71.

¹⁸² Ibid., 72.

true greatness generally spread amongst us, is the right time to venture on an enterprise such as the one we offer here.¹⁸³

The reader was left in no doubt: by subscribing to Blussé's series he would be assisting himself—artisans would benefit from the separate sections that covered their craft or trade, collectors would find much food for thought in this series, and people working in government would acquire universal knowledge that would enable them to become independent of the recommendations of workers 'who are the most unskilled and greedy'.¹⁸⁴ By subscribing, the reader would moreover be contributing to the prosperity of his country. All these benefits and a helping of philanthropy on top were to be had at a bargain price from publishers 'who offer as a guarantee their already established good name and reliability (if they may say so, and why not?)'.¹⁸⁵

In the wording of his prospectus, Blussé showed great confidence in the success of his series 'And why not?' Listing by name a large number of societies that would profit indirectly from the publication and dedicating the first volume of his series to the *Oeconomische Tak*, he shrewdly targeted a large group of wealthy members of these societies who could be expected not to be averse to seeing their names in print, associated with a project benefiting the Fatherland. He also ensured when announcing the cost of the series that individual volumes—on average three guilders apiece—would also be within the reach of artisans, among whom one might likewise reasonably expect a degree of enthusiasm. In the absence of technical handbooks, tradesmen had had to rely until then on knowledge passed down by word of mouth. By keeping the conditions for subscription flexible—for instance, one could end one's subscription after each four volumes—Pieter may have been trying to tempt this group, too, to take advantage of the twenty percent reduction for subscribers.

Nevertheless, there was no great rush to subscribe. The list published in 1788 contains only 221 names. If we compare this figure with the 3,000 subscribers for the third edition of Wagenaar's *Vaderlandsche Historie* (Dutch History), which came out two years later—the rights to which, ironically, the publisher Allart had bought from Blussé and his partners—Pieter's harvest was a meagre one.¹⁸⁶ Price would not have played a sig-

¹⁸³ Ibid., 72-73.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 80.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 81.

¹⁸⁶ J. Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie* (2 vols; Amsterdam 1790-1803) I, list of names of subscribers.

nificant part. Allart's 21-volume reprint was priced at forty guilders, while Pieter's brand-new 24-volume series cost a mere ten guilders more, at fifty guilders.

If we compare the two lists of subscribers, we find that the readership was much the same in both cases. Aside from a large number whose profession is not given, they are a mixed bag that includes tradesmen, teachers, doctors, surgeons, magistrates, soldiers, clergymen, lawyers, students, surveyors and merchants.¹⁸⁷

It is possible that Blussé had failed to assess the market accurately; he may have been carried away by his passion for handicrafts, a hangover from his youthful employment binding books. It was a disappointed man who in the foreword to the first part, lamented that there was less support for the project 'than we had the right to expect'. It is also possible that potential buyers, unfamiliar with the genre, were not aware of the entertainment value of such a series, and that after the first parts had appeared they were less hesitant about taking out a subscription. In 1791 Pieter placed a new advertisement intended to attract people who now regretted their earlier decision not to subscribe, offering the first eight volumes again for the original price.¹⁸⁸ Nor can we rule out—particularly in the light of Holtrop's experiences—the possibility that the market for single books from the series was far greater than the sales to subscribers. The artisans for whom the series was in part designed would have been primarily interested in the volumes dealing with their own occupation.¹⁸⁹

This is confirmed by the number of copies printed. We only have figures dating from after 1797, when Pieter's son Adolph, working for his father, took charge of a printer's for which there are several surviving cashbooks. The print run of the volume on silkworm breeding that came out in 1798, when the publisher had a good idea of the market, was 880 copies—four times the number of subscribers ten years earlier. 1,550 copies of the volume

¹⁸⁷ For a breakdown of the type of people who subscribed to Wagenaar's history see J.J. Kloek, 'Lezen als levensbehoefte. Roman en romanpubliek in de tweede helft van de 18e eeuw', *Literatuur* 1 (1984) 136–42. I have only counted the professions on Blussé's list of subscribers: 51 no profession given, 24 tradesmen; 3 teachers, 8 doctors and surgeons; 37 members of the magistracy and other city officials, 9 soldiers, 6 clergymen, 2 lawyers, 2 students, 3 surveyors and 4 merchants.

¹⁸⁸ A.B. Saakes, *Naamlijst van Nederduitsche boeken* (Amsterdam 1791) 130, 131. Hereafter referred to as Saakes.

¹⁸⁹ It would consequently seem no coincidence that the list of subscribers recorded a fair number of carpenters and builders (seven out of the 24 tradesmen). The first part of the series would deal with aspects of carpentry.



24. Engraving by J.C. Bendorp after a design by D. Kerhoff from Gerrit Paape's *De plateelbakker* (Dordrecht 1794). National Library, The Hague.

on the cultivation of madder were printed in 1801, and *The Vinegar Maker* appeared in 1803 in an edition of 1,600 copies. Because records of the print runs of the latter two volumes were split up in the ledgers according to paper quality, it is also possible to get an idea of readers' preferences when it came to design. Interestingly, it is the figures for the more expensive paper quality that are the highest.¹⁹⁰ It would seem that most readers could afford a more expensive copy or at any rate were prepared to make a certain financial sacrifice. Of course, it makes sense that people would choose stronger paper when buying what was literally a handbook. After all, a book like this was not simply something one read once and put on the shelf. It had to be more durable. This was the experience of the bookseller who still had this series in stock in 1850. L. Buijnsters-Smets concluded from this that it had proved extremely difficult to sell the books, but in view of the relatively large number of copies printed, another explanation is possible.¹⁹¹ It is quite conceivable that although Pieter Blussé had certainly not intended his series to last for ever, he had factored in a long period of sale. This would explain why the series was never remaindered and was even listed in an 1865 catalogue at the original price.¹⁹²

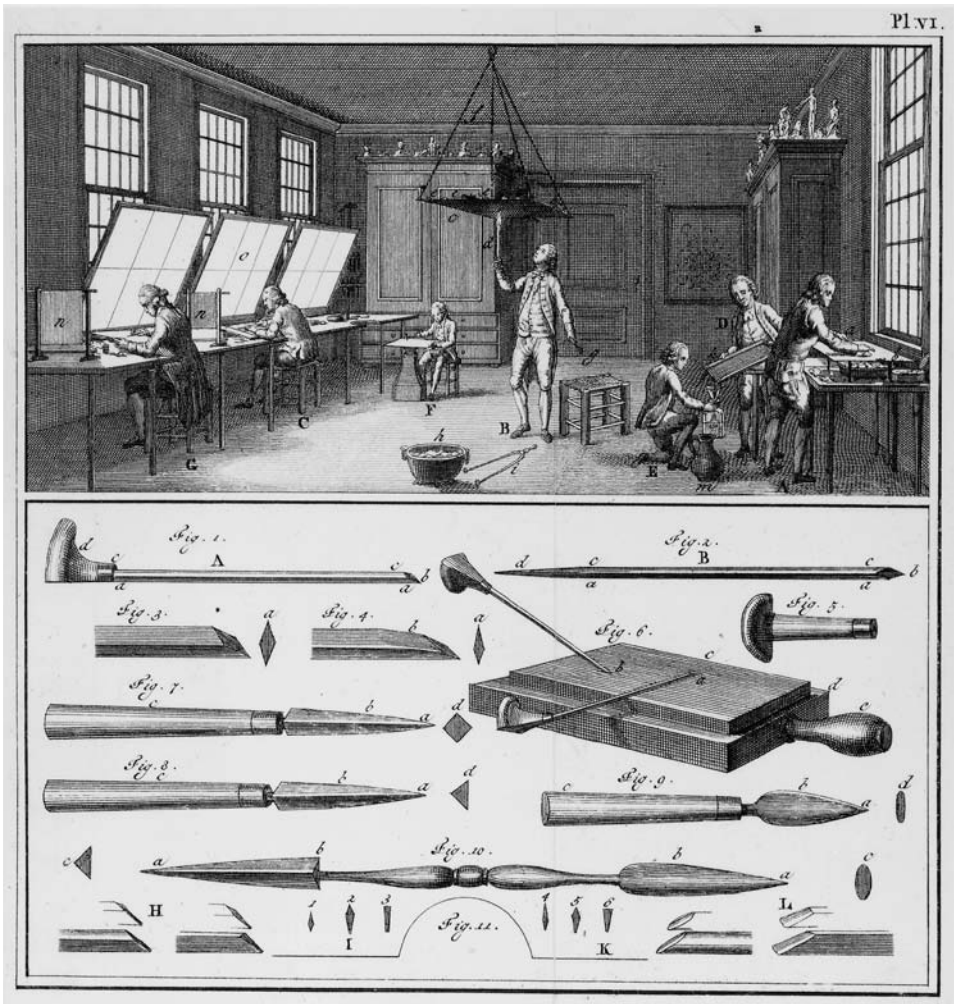
Recruiting Authors and Illustrators

The series appeared over a period of thirty-two years. It is doubtful whether such a long publication period was envisaged at the outset. It would not have been difficult to find illustrators. On closer inspection most of the engravings in the *Complete Description* prove to be copies of plates in the corresponding volumes of the French publication *Description des arts et métiers*, not originals—and a limited selection at that. The plates had not been legitimately acquired, with copyright, from the French publishers. They were—as various discrepancies reveal—copied or even traced from the originals. The plates which have been copied may be detected because of the difference in size. The illustration is smaller than the original and so cannot have been traced. The size of other plates corresponds to that of

¹⁹⁰ People could choose between a cheaper or more expensive quality of paper. The book on the cultivation of madder had 650 copies printed on the cheaper *dessendiaan* paper and 900 on best paper; for the *Vinegar Maker* there were 700 copies on *dessendiaan* and again 900 on best paper.

¹⁹¹ L. Buijnsters-Smets, 'De "volledige beschrijving van alle konsten, ambachten" enz. (1788-1820)', *Antiek* 13 (1978/79) 471-84, 474. The complete series is also still listed at the original subscription price in a Blussé & Van Braam catalogue dating from 1865 (ex: KVBBB).

¹⁹² On the practice of remaindering books see Van Goinga, *Alom te bekomen*, 153-78.



25. Illustration from A. Fokke Simonsz, *De graveur* (Dordrecht 1796) National Library, The Hague.

the original, but not to the page size of Blussé's series which was far smaller; this problem was solved by folding the engravings so that they fitted into the book and then pasting them in. Evidently the publisher was trying to make a virtue of necessity. The engravings were printed with a wide margin on the left so that they acted as fold-out sheets, allowing the reader to study the text and the relevant illustration at the same time, and thus not fall victim to the irritation, as the Dutch poet Constantijn Huygens so

tellingly put it, of having to 'constantly turn the pages back and forth like a bird springing a thousand times from branch to branch'.¹⁹³

In the eighteenth century it was not considered a criminal form of plagiarism to copy someone else's engravings, particularly if these engravings belonged to a foreign publisher—although Diderot was roundly criticized for this practice at the time—but it was certainly not very good manners.¹⁹⁴ Consequently Blussé did not refer to the illustrations or their makers in his advertisements, prospectuses and forewords, except in those rare cases when some original engravings were included. In the text of one of the volumes in the series we are however indirectly given some interesting information about the technique of tracing engravings. In the volume dealing with his own occupation, the engraver Arend Fokke provided an enthusiastic description of a chance discovery by the Haarlem artist H. Schwegman, of 'an easy method of copying the drawing or print that you wish to imitate on the copper plate'. With these instructions, Fokke asserted, it was child's play. What Schwegman had discovered was

that, when one draws something on paper, be it sketchily or in great detail, with light and shade, and does this with a common pencil at a half stiver apiece, commonly known as a *Klaverblad*, and then takes this drawing with the side that has been drawn upon and places that on top of a smooth, clean and evenly-polished copper plate and then places both these—copper plate and drawing—between some sheets of paper and then in an ordinary linen press or other press, which is then screwed down tightly and left thus for about twenty-four hours, the drawing will be very clearly transferred on to the copper plate such that afterwards, having carried out the appropriate preparations described below, one can etch or engrave it.¹⁹⁵

Fokke went on to suggest a few more practical tips for engravers. It is quite possible that Fokke's contribution to the *Complete Description* was not confined to writing, and that he was also responsible, anonymously, for a number of engravings. And it is also conceivable that the Dordrecht engraver J.C. Bendorp, who produced most of the original plates for the series, also engaged in copying.

Organizing illustrations was one thing, but recruiting authors seems to have presented a great many more problems. A suspiciously large number

¹⁹³ P. Dijstelberge, 'Donc je suis. Een filosoof en zijn boek in de zeventiende eeuw', *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse boekgeschiedenis* 6 (1999) 123–36, 134.

¹⁹⁴ See Cole and Watts, *The Handicrafts of France*, 41, for an example of plagiarism in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*.

¹⁹⁵ Fokke, *De graveur*, p. 292 ff.

of books in the series—eight of the first ten volumes—are by a single author, the Amsterdam apothecary P.J. Kasteleijn, who had to learn all about paint-making, distilling, the manufacture of pottery, silk-dyeing, paper-making, soap-boiling, tanning and more for Blussé's series. This one-eyed, poverty-stricken author once declared to some friends that he reckoned on an early death because he had 'already written too much and sat too much'. He did indeed die in harness in 1794; had he not done so he would probably have contributed more volumes to the series.¹⁹⁶ Apparently he considered the carpenter's trade a step too far for him. In 1788, in what was planned to be the first volume of the series, the account of this trade was to have been written by a friend of Kasteleijn's, G. Brender à Brandis.

After Kasteleijn's death, his task appears to have been temporarily shouldered by a writer less erudite, but far better known because of his biting political satires; this was the equally penniless and prolific jack-of-all-trades, Gerrit Paape.¹⁹⁷ The account of the potter's work, *Plateelbakker*, which appeared in 1794, was Paape's work, as was the anonymously published volume on beekeeping, *Honingbijenteelt*, of 1797, together with the equally anonymous *Zijdenteelt en kweeking van de moerbeziënboom* on silk production and the cultivation of the mulberry published the following year. In his autobiography he describes the third part of this series, *De porcelain-fabriek*, as a translation he had made.¹⁹⁸ In Blussé's accounts, however, this volume was credited to Kasteleijn. It was probably a joint project undertaken by both translators, and Paape's contribution was not considered large enough to warrant a separate mention. It is also possible, though, that Blussé preferred to publish the work under the name of a writer who was less controversial and evidently more of an expert on the subject.

There was less reason for secrecy about Paape's authorship of the volume on pottery, *De plateelbakker of Delftsch aardewerkmaaker*. He was born in Delft and had worked as a decorator of pottery in his native city for many years; his name on the title page would guarantee a certain expert knowl-

¹⁹⁶ On this author see G. Brender à Brandis, 'Levensschets van Petrus Johannes Kasteleyn' in *Proeven van geschied- en letterkundige oefeningen, zoowel den koophandel en de scheepvaart als de dicht- en letterkunde betreffende* (Haarlem 1801) 248-70.

¹⁹⁷ See for instance G. Paape, *Mijne vrolijke wijsgeerte in mijne ballingschap*, P. Altena ed. (Hilversum 1996) [= *Egodocumenten* 11] 7-68; G. Paape, *De Bataafsche Republiek*, P. Altena ed. (Nijmegen 1998) 99-117.

¹⁹⁸ G. Paape, *Mijne vrolijke wijsgeerte*, 114, see also the commentary by Peter Altena on p. 157.

edge of the subject.¹⁹⁹ On the other hand, it is highly unlikely that this self-taught man had a thorough knowledge of bee-keeping or the habits of the silkworm. Because these two volumes were published three and four years respectively after Kasteleijn's death, Blussé opted for a different solution: the works were published anonymously. Even the introductions and the advertisements for these two volumes contain no suggestion of who the author might be. We only know of Paape's involvement because he recommended the works, with a degree of pride, to the Department for National Education.²⁰⁰ In the notes of the minister at this department there is a record of the gift from 'the citizen Gerrit Paape' on 29 March 1800 together with the remark that the books 'have been freely translated from the German by said author'.²⁰¹ A free interpretation would have been inevitable: German was not Paape's strongest language. His delightful autobiography, entitled *My Cheerful Philosophy of Life*, describes in a highly humorous manner how he had been taken on by a publisher before he knew a word of German:

Well, there I was, confronted by this book in German and I couldn't even read most of the letters. I acquired a teacher to instruct me in this language, but this good man was appalled when I told him at my first lesson that I planned to begin translating immediately a book by one of the best German writers. ... I had five lessons with this good man and then—I let him go.²⁰²

This episode took place in the 1780s when Paape was assiduously searching for some means of making a living other than painting pottery. When he presented the book to the minister, however, he had already been working at the department for two years and was less dependent on his pen for earning his daily bread.²⁰³ This could explain why Paape's contributions to Blussé's series cease in 1798.

After this Blussé failed to find authors willing to write about more than one trade and the production of the series grew ever more sluggish. The publication of the first fifteen volumes spanned ten years—from 1788 to 1798—whereas it was another twenty-two years before the other nine volumes saw the light of day. Unlike the publishers of the French series,

¹⁹⁹ G. Paape, *De plateelbakker of Delftsch aardewerkmaaker*, with foreword and commentary by D.F. Lunsingh Scheurleer, facsimile edition (Amsterdam 1978), introduction.

²⁰⁰ His autobiography was published in 1792, well before the publication of the two volumes in Blussé's series (in 1797 and in 1798).

²⁰¹ ARA, Archive of the Department of Home Affairs, inv. 284, dated 29 March 1800.

²⁰² Quoted in Nieuweboer, 'De "Vrolijke reis van Gerrit Paape"', 57.

²⁰³ P. Altena, epilogue in Paape, *De Bataafsche Republiek*, 106.

Description des arts et metiers, Blussé was unable to look for original copy in a well-filled file of documents on which various scholars had been working for more than half a century with the financial support of the king. Unlike his French equivalent, Blussé did not have the advantage of a reservoir of scholars working in a joint programme under the auspices of the *Académie Royale*. Clearly, it was rare to find a translator such as Kasteleijn, with a wealth of knowledge, an amazing appetite for work and the willingness to carry out research so that volumes in the French series could be adapted to the situation in the Netherlands. After Kasteleijn's death Blussé had to rely on a few rare birds: people with sufficient knowledge of a foreign language to translate information from foreign manuals, who could furthermore write in a clear uncomplicated style, and who also knew what they were writing about when describing the various crafts and occupations—knowledge preferably acquired in their daily lives.

He found these skills in such writers as Arend Fokke Simonszoon, like his father a famous engraver, who wrote the volume on his own trade. Fokke was also a bookseller and an active member of societies, where he was renowned for the great rate at which he was able to produce one treatise after another, combined with his talent for popularizing—according to some critics, vulgarizing—scholarly subjects. When he gave one of his many talks—he so often substituted for other society members that it had become customary to give him a fee for his services—people would come from far and wide to hear him. His talks were interesting, amusing and larded with anecdotes.²⁰⁴ In short, he was highly suited to his work. Furthermore, he was available—for his bookshop collapsed under financial difficulties in 1793 and he was forced to live from his writing. Towards the end of 1795 he was appointed full-time editor of the *Handelingen van de municipaliteit der stad Amsterdam* (Proceedings of the Municipality of Amsterdam), periodically-published reports, at an annual salary of 2,000 guilders, and his financial problems and his availability ceased. We may therefore assume that he wrote the text for Blussé, which was published in 1796, in the preceding period.

It was probably not the need for money, the reason why Paape and Fokke wrote for Blussé's series, that motivated Hendrik de Haas, a bookseller,

²⁰⁴ See M. de Niet, *En als hij begon wist hij van geen uitscheiden. De verhandelingen van Arend Fokke Simonsz (1755-1812)* (Master's thesis, University of Leiden 1988); *Ibid.*, 'De neergang van een voordrachtskunstenaar. Over Arend Fokke Simonsz (1755-1812)', *MJCW* 13 (1990) 74-80. See also M. Vierstra, "Een onwilligen glimlach". Iets over het werk van de 18de-eeuwse voordrachtskunstenaar Arend Fokke Simonsz', *MJCW* 17 (1994) 47-52.

publisher and bookbinder in Dordrecht,²⁰⁵ whose work on bookbinding appeared as the twenty-second volume in Blussé's series in 1806 and remains a standard work to this day.²⁰⁶ According to the German traveller and writer on commercial affairs, P.A. Nemnich, De Haas was an excellent bookbinder, who worked regularly for Pieter Blussé. Bills in the Blussé archives reveal that much of the firm's bookbinding was contracted out to De Haas. Not only did De Haas possess a profound knowledge of his craft, he was also—as emerges in his foreword—familiar enough with French and German to be able to consult reference works in these languages. He presumably picked up these languages on his travels after his apprenticeship in Dordrecht. As a 'bookbinder's journeyman' he travelled through Europe, visiting Geneva, Paris, Amiens and places in Germany. Thus he extended his expertise beyond the knowledge of Netherlandish bookbinding techniques. When Blussé heard that De Haas had been working for more than twenty years on a manuscript about his trade, designed to be of use to his pupils and friends after his death, and that he had already written 128 pages of this work, the ever-diligent publisher spotted his chance and begged his bookbinder to prepare the manuscript for press as quickly as possible so that it could appear as part of the *Volledige beschrijving* series. Blussé succeeded. De Haas wrote in his foreword, 'I have allowed myself to be persuaded this year and have since completed my work.'²⁰⁷

Like De Haas, Jacobus Buijs, who compiled the volume on beer brewing, was a man with a profound knowledge of his subject.²⁰⁸ Little more can be discovered about his background other than that, as we read on the title page, he had a brewery in Klundert, south of Rotterdam.²⁰⁹ In the text he

²⁰⁵ From the taxes paid by De Haas in 1808 (7:8- guilders) it appears that his finances were healthy. The prosperous booksellers P. van Braam and P. Blussé were in the next bracket, taxed at 13:19- guilders (ARA, Ministry of Finances 1795-1813, The archive of the Treasury for the audits of the Generality Lands expenses (3.01.28), inv. 592).

²⁰⁶ On this publication see J. Storm van Leeuwen, 'A bookbinding ascribed to Hendrik Haas', *Quaerendo* 10 (1980) 237-49. *De boekbinder* was published by Hes (Utrecht) in a facsimile edition in 1984 with an introduction by W.G.J. Callenbach and a treatise on the book and the author by J. Storm van Leeuwen.

²⁰⁷ H. de Haas, *De boekbinder* (Dordrecht 1806), foreword.

²⁰⁸ J. Buys, *De bierbrouwer en mouter* (Dordrecht 1799).

²⁰⁹ Jacobus Kornelis Buijs, son of Jacobus Buijs and Cornelia Sanders Bisschop, was born on 6 December 1771 in Klundert (in the province of South Holland) and died in the same place on 6 May 1821. Four children survived him, one of them Sibrecht Buijs, who like his father, was a member of the town council of Klundert in 1806. After the Batavian take-over Sibrecht Buijs became a member of Provisional Municipal Council, which indicates that he was a Patriot. We assume his father was of the same political persuasion. Unfortunately I have not been able to discover anything about Buijs's brewery. It is clear from his

proclaimed himself to be the owner of a small brewery with knowledge handed down from father to son and forty years' experience as a brewer. The work itself reveals that he had a ready pen, subtle enough to include veiled advertising for his own brewery. He described with gusto, for instance, the abominable stench of rancid beer that greeted his nostrils on a recent visit to a number of breweries in large towns. The visit had been intended to show his thirteen-year-old son that his father's brewery was not 'the eighth Wonder of the World', but the account of it would also seem to contain a message for potential clients of his own brewery—particularly when he followed some repulsive details about the working methods elsewhere with the remark that 'some lads who formerly worked in that brewery' had pointed out to him that 'it was considered to be the best-run brewery in the whole town'.²¹⁰ From his footnotes it becomes clear that he had read and digested the essential literature about his craft. However, he only refers to Dutch-language publications, among them the three-volume reference work *Burger- boer en land-edelman* (citizen, farmer and country squire)—Holtrop's *pièce de résistance* of 1794 we have already discussed.²¹¹ Unlike Kasteleijn, who attempted to raise his work to a more philosophical or abstract level by introducing considerations of a theoretical or historical nature, Buijs remains down to earth. But he cannot resist letting his readers know that his knowledge is not confined to brewing beer:

I leave it to the architects, physicists and geographers to decide whether the ancient Egyptians were the first to discover how to make a drink from corn to replace the lack of wine in their corn-rich lands; and whether this drink could be kept for longer periods than the Beer that is now brewed at the Cape of Good Hope (which lies about as many degrees south of the Equator as Egypt lies to the north), which becomes solid in three or four days; nevertheless, because of its heavy nature, caused by an excess of corn, wild guzzling generally makes people blind drunk.²¹²

He likewise did not consider it necessary to dwell on the different methods of beer brewing at home and abroad or the range of beers available. Since

will, however, that he was part of a group of craftsmen, although he was described at that time as a private individual. The executors of his will also belong to this group; there is a master mason, a tanner and a brewer from Klundert (RA Noord-Brabant, DTB Klundert, Doopboeken 6 December 1771; *ibid.*, Memories van successie, 6 May 1821; D.A.K. van der Zande, *Een kijkje te Klundert in den zoogenaamden Franschen tijd (1793-1815)* (Zevenbergen 1892) 30-31.

²¹⁰ J. Buys, *De bierbrouwer*, 6-7.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 10.

the only beers produced in the Republic were 'whitish or pale brown', he decided to concentrate on these: 'ignoring whether it should be called White, or English, or Liege or Brown. It is sufficient if it has a name'.²¹³

The sentimental poet and one-time confectioner Jan Hendrik Reisig who undertook to write the volume on sugar refining in 1793, was an entirely different type.²¹⁴ Blussé introduced this poet and translator, whose translations included Milton's *Paradise Lost*, as an author who combined two important qualities: he had 'a ready pen and could describe matters clearly' and had 'spent a good deal of time observing matters in a notable sugar factory in Amsterdam'. He went on to describe Reisig's approach to his observation of sugar manufacturing. Apparently he had taken the trouble

to visit the workshop as if for the first time, inspecting everything item by item, and writing it down as if he were giving his instructions to a workman, and even undertook himself those things that a vigilant manager of such a factory should do and must not lose sight of in various cases.²¹⁵

The author, probably a relation of the Amsterdam sugar refiner Johannes Gottlieb Reisig,²¹⁶ was, in other words, not a tradesman but a retired manufacturer who revisited his 'paradise lost' to brush up his knowledge.²¹⁷ The text itself is written from the viewpoint of an employer. Reisig writes at length, for instance, about the best way to set up a sugar refinery in the Republic. He also devotes an exhaustive discussion to the wages of the employees in the Amsterdam sugar industry—broken down according to the type of worker—revealing considerable compassion:

There are also day-labourersthey earn 7 guilders and 10 stivers a week ... and it is on such a small wage that families with a wife and six or seven children have to make ends meet, and in so expensive a city as AmsterdamThere is thus a common saying, which is true in all particulars, namely: the day-labourer in a sugar factory is a poor creature.²¹⁸

²¹³ Ibid., 11.

²¹⁴ K. ter Laan, *Letterkundig woordenboek* (The Hague 1941) 402. See also Van der Aa, *Biographisch woordenboek* and the comments made by Heinemeyer (UBL, Ltk 1001, RL 120, 175-76, 180, 190, 215, 284, 194).

²¹⁵ This and previous quotes taken from the foreword to the volume on sugar refining by J.H. Reisig, *De suikerraffinadeur* (Dordrecht 1793).

²¹⁶ See A.M. Elias, P.C.M. Schölvink, *Volksrepresentanten en wetgevers. De politieke elite in de Bataafs-Franse tijd, 1796-1810* (Amsterdam 1991) 135.

²¹⁷ He died in 1794, a year after the publication of *The Sugar Refiner*.

²¹⁸ *De suikerraffinadeur* 199.

Johan de Kanter, who wrote the volume on the cultivation of the madder plant, was rather more down to earth.²¹⁹ He provides a systematic and meticulous account of every stage of the production process, from cultivation to the final processing—crushing the madder. Like Reisig, De Haas, Paape, Buys and Fokke, this lecturer in physics and former notary, originally from Zeeland, wrote an original work for Blussé's series, based in part on his own researches. Unlike those authors, however, in writing his study of the cultivation and production of madder, he did not have years of professional experience to fall back on. His career as notary would have been of greatest benefit in finding informants—a farmer from Noordegouwe, a man whose job had been drying madder, a merchant from Zierikzee and a master mason from the same town—whom he thanks profusely at the end of his forty-page volume for the knowledge they contributed.

De Kanter emerges as a typical club man with wide-ranging interests. He was a member of the Batavian Society, which concerned itself with empirical philosophy, the *Bataafsch Genootschap voor Proefondervindelijke Wijsbegeerte*; member of the Society for the Promotion of Public Good, the Nut, and member of the Zeeland association for the sciences, *Zeeuws Genootschap voor Wetenschappen*, of which he was secretary for twenty-five years.²²⁰ His book on the cultivation of madder was not his first publication—he had previously written treatises on history and physics, the most important being his *Chronijk van Zierikzee* (Chronicle of Zierikzee) of 1795—but it is certainly one of his early works. After 1800 there followed a stream of publications on topics as varied as the working of lightning conductors, telescopes, thermometers and steam ships to the calculation of the position of the planets, the French invasion of the island of Walcheren and the danger of being buried alive.

Blussé's publication of a 500-page two-volume standard work on organ building was also the result of the efforts of an enthusiast—Jan van Heurn,

²¹⁹ *Volledige beschrijving van het planten, telen, reeden en bereiden der meekrap*; this volume was published in 1802.

²²⁰ Member of the Dutch Reformed Church and Patriot J. de Kanter Philippusz (1762-1841) studied mathematics and physics and then became a notary in Zierikzee. He was also a lecturer at Middelburg Museum (BATGE 1791, ZGW 1788-1841, Nut 1796 (Onderzoeksbestand genootschapsleden)). I thank Gerard Schulte-Nordholt for information concerning members of societies in the Republic, which he compiled together with W.W. Mijnhart. I also wish to thank Wijnandt Mijnhart for permission to consult this work. See also Van der Aa and M.J. van Lieburg, H.A.M. Snelders, "*De bevordering en volmaking der proefondervindelijke wijsbegeerte*". *De rol van het Bataafsch Genootschap te Rotterdam in de geschiedenis van de natuurwetenschappen, geneeskunde en techniek* (1769-1988) [= *Nieuwe verhandelingen Bataafsch genootschap* 3rd series, 4] (Rotterdam 1989) 142.

a lawyer and professor from Den Bosch.²²¹ In his foreword he stresses that he wrote the book primarily for people like himself, who 'having originally practised the organ, either for pleasure or with a view to earning a living by building organs in due course, wish to further and perfect their knowledge'. Because he did not want to be simply 'a blind imitator or translator of that excellent work' he based his own work only in part on *L'art du facteur d'orgues*, Bedos de Celles's contribution to the *Description des arts et métiers*. He expressed his own ideas in areas where he disagreed with that author and added so much material that this volume expanded to become the largest in Blussé's series.²²²

The contribution by Joannes F. Martinet of Zutphen, the author of the highly popular four-part *Katechismus der natuur* (The Catechism of Nature), was on a considerably more modest scale.²²³ This club man and supporter of the *Oeconomische Tak* was, like Van Heurn and De Kantner, an enthusiast—though not of charcoal burning, the topic he had to deal with. His interest in this topic was most probably connected with one of his other favourite pastimes, taking instructive walks in the countryside, an exercise he fervently recommends in some of his other works.²²⁴ In *De houtskoolbrander* (The Charcoal Burner), along with some technical information that he presumably acquired from his French predecessor in *L'art du charbonnier*, he describes the kilns that he would have seen on his country walks around Zutphen. We learn about the annual invasion of 'foreigners, in particular people who live south of Haaksbergen [in the northeastern province of Overijssel]' who come to make charcoal for the farmers in the district and also that 'there are presently two men living in Silvolde [near the border with Germany] who have learned the art [of charcoal burning] ... and travel around to burn piles of wood for people.'²²⁵

We can deduce from the significant differences in quality and scope of the volumes and the diversity of the authors—skilled craftsmen, manufacturers, dilettantes, and jack-of-all-trades hacks—just how hard it must have been for Blussé to find enough suitable authors to complete his series.

²²¹ See the file of members of societies compiled by Gerard Schulte Nordholt, Van der Aa, UBL: Heynemeyer Ltk 1001 HE-HU: 77, 211-12.

²²² There is an explicit description in Cole and Watts, *The Handicrafts of France*, 19-20.

²²³ J.F. Martinet, *Katechismus der natuur* (4 vols. Amsterdam 1777-1779). Translated into English as *The Catechism of Nature* by John Hall, London.

²²⁴ See for instance F. de Haas and B. Paasman, *J.F. Martinet en de achttiende eeuw: in ijver en onverzadelijken lust om te leeren* (Zutphen 1987); B. Paasman, *J.F. Martinet. Een Zutphens filosoof in de achttiende eeuw* (Zutphen 1971).

²²⁵ J.F. Martinet, *De houtskoolbrander* (Dordrecht 1790) 16.

He must have had an extensive network in order to bring such a motley crew together. In most cases it is not difficult to trace the connection between the publisher and the writer. A number of authors appear to have come from associates of Holtrop, Blussé's Amsterdam partner. Before he began to work on Blussé's series, for instance, P.J. Kasteleijn had published most of his writings with Holtrop.²²⁶ The same is true of Jan Hendrik Reisig—his collected poems were published by Holtrop in 1789, and he worked for him as a translator from 1792 to 1803.²²⁷ It is quite likely that Holtrop had these writers on his list as potential contributors to his encyclopaedia and that when these plans foundered, Blussé seized the opportunity to snare them for his own series. Gerrit Paape, who had published four titles with Blussé in short order before he wrote *De Plateelbakker*,²²⁸ and Johan de Kanter, who was at the start of his writing career when he wrote the volume on the cultivation of madder but had already had two books published by him, both came from Blussé's stable. Blussé may have met De Kanter through his Dordrecht connections. The list of subscribers for the *Volledige beschrijving* (Complete Description) includes one 'P. de Kanter of Dordrecht, a Patriot merchant and a former inspector of madder'. Like Johan de Kanter, he came from Zierikzee in Zeeland. And there are others from Dordrecht in this group: Hendrik de Haas, the bookbinder, and Jan van Dalen, the carpenter. Admittedly Jacob Buijs, the brewer from Klundert, did not live in Dordrecht, but his home was only a stone's throw away. In about 1800, when Buijs was completing his contribution to the book, Blussé had just set up a wine-trading business on behalf of his son Hendrik and it is highly likely that he had become acquainted with Buijs through the trade.²²⁹ He may have known Arend Fokke Simonszoon since they were children. In the period when Pieter was apprenticed to the Amsterdam bookseller Jacobus Loveringh—from 1765 to 1769—Fokke was apprenticed

²²⁶ Including a great many plays, among them *Olintes* (1786, reprinted 1788), *Erastus en Lucinde* (1786), *Eduard de Derde* (1786) and *Carolina van Eerburg* (1788). As well as writing several volumes of the series for Blussé, he also worked for him in 1789-90, when he translated the collected poetry and prose of Frederick, Baron von der Trenck, *Mengelwerken in dichtmaat en prosa van Frederik, Vrijheer van der Trenck*, from the original German (4 vols.; Dordrecht 1789-90).

²²⁷ He was the new editor of the eight-volume *Kabinet van Nederlandsche en Kleefsche outheden* (1792-1803) that W. Holtrop and J.A. Crajenschot took over from Blussé).

²²⁸ *Simson* (1789) (reprinted in 1790 and 1791), *Jacob* (1791; 2nd edition in 1791), *Salomon* (1792) and the three-volume *Mijn tegenwoordig Vaderland of wijsgerige geschiedenis van Vrankrijk* (1792).

²²⁹ See the following chapter for Pieter Blussé's sideline as a wine merchant.

to one of Loveringh's business associates, Steven van Esvelde.²³⁰ This may also be how he met Fokke's father, who had previously worked on and off for the firm of Blussé.²³¹ After 1767 they collaborated more closely and between 1767 and 1771 Fokke Senior produced six cityscapes and other works for the firm. The link between Pieter Blussé and the Den Bosch lawyer Jan van Heurn was probably Pieter's good friend W.F. Hoijsman, the man Pieter tried to assist in finding a suitable wife. Both Jan van Heurn and W.F. Hoijsman were members of the book club set up in Den Bosch in 1784 which called itself *Door leeslust zaam verbonden* (bound together by a love of reading).²³²

Blussé's political Patriot network was probably also useful to him in recruiting authors. One striking similarity between all these authors, so different in other respects, is their loyalty to the Patriot cause. Some of them, such as Gerrit Paape, Hendrik de Haas²³³ and Gerrit Brender à Brandis (of whom more later) were outspoken radicals; others, such as Fokke, Kasteleijn and Van Heurn²³⁴ were perhaps less vociferous but certainly sympathized with the Patriots. When Blussé began his series after the Orangist counter-coup in 1787, the fact that his authors were Patriot sympathizers would have had a useful side-effect—at least some of them, marginalized again, would have welcomed an occupation and the associated earnings. This advantage was reversed, however, after the Batavian Revolution of 1795. The coup gave prolific writers like Gerrit Paape and Arend Fokke, who had the right profile to take over the active role of the late Kasteleijn, the opportunity to exchange an uncertain existence as a freelance writer for the security of a permanent job. Paape became a civil servant in the Batavian Republic while Fokke became editor of an Amsterdam municipal publication. It can scarcely be coincidental that most of the volumes appeared between 1788 and 1798.

²³⁰ See M. de Niet, *De zonderlinge talenten van Arend Fokke Simonsz (1755-1812)*; Internet information at <http://home.wxs.nl/~nearden/fokkebio.htm>.

²³¹ He was the illustrator of Tielman van Bracht, *Tuingedagten in zes zangen* (Dordrecht 1764).

²³² RA North Brabant, Van Heurn Family Collection, inv. 25.

²³³ As a publisher De Haas was responsible, among other things, for the Dutch translation of the famous French declaration of 1789, the revolutionary *De rechten van den mensch en van den burger* (The Rights of Man and of the Citizen) in a very small format that fitted into the palm of the hand and cost just half a stiver (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 49).

²³⁴ This is evident from Van Heurn's appointment to a number of important political posts after the Batavian Revolution.

Delays: The Architect—A Case in Point

The publication of *De bouwkonstenaar* (The Architect)—the volume that was supposed to have come out first under the title *De timmerman* (The Carpenter) in 1788 but in the end took longest to produce—is illustrative of the complex combination of factors, including the shift of power following the Batavian Revolution of 1795 and the ups and downs in the health of some of the authors, that caused considerable delays in the production of Blussé's series. Before the Dordrecht carpenter Jan van Dalen eventually completed the work in 1806, three authors had worked on it without success. Blussé's first choice had been the versatile self-taught Gerrit Brender à Brandis of Amsterdam: teacher of mathematics and astronomy, official municipal controller of weights and measures, gauger of wine casks, prolific writer and extremely active club man—he was a member of twelve different societies. Most of his published work dates from before 1793. In that year he was appointed salaried secretary of the Society for the Promotion of Public Good. Following the 1795 coup, when he was also appointed secretary to the new Amsterdam municipal council and elected a member of the *Comité de Justice*, he would have been a very busy man.²³⁵ But all this was still in the future when Blussé approached him some time in 1787 and asked him to write the first part of the *Complete Description*. Brender à Brandis agreed and Blussé made every attempt to assist him, in order to speed up the production process:

To that end we supplied him with all the materials he required and gave him the freedom to avail himself of the services of the architectural draughtsman and engraver Philips, then still living, to make the necessary illustrations.

Little came, however, of the ambitious plans of this so-called 'homo universalis'. Brender à Brandis, it would seem, had bitten off rather more than he could chew. Then, as a result of his new public posts, he found himself pressed for time and, to cap it all, in 1789 his engraver and source of information, Casper Philips Jacobszoon, died.²³⁶

²³⁵ See Van der Aa, *Biographisch woordenboek*; Frederiks and Van den Branden, *Biographisch woordenboek*; Heinemeyer A-B: 445-48; Ltk 1001 and W.W. Mijnhart and A.J. Wichers eds, *Om het algemeen volksgeluk. Twee eeuwen particulier initiatief 1784-1984* (Amsterdam 1984) 416.

²³⁶ Van der Aa, *Biographisch woordenboek*. This engraver (who provided the plates for Blussé and partners' *Tegenwoordige staat van alle volkeren* and Wagenaar's *Vaderlandsche historie*) lived from 1732 to 1789. Like Simon Fokke he studied under his father, Jan Casper Philips.

So it remained at a rudimentary stage, either because the man, who was engaged in other work, did not feel himself adequate to the task in all respects, or because he was prevented by his ever-growing and multiplying occupations.

Consoling himself with the thought that 'a longer delay would be offset by a more thorough treatment of the topic', Blussé decided to go ahead and publish several of the other volumes, initially planned for later, and await events.²³⁷ It is unlikely that Blussé would have been able to remain completely calm in the face of this setback. The postponement of this, the first volume—announced with such a fanfare in the advertisements—must have thrown a considerable spanner in the works. His advertising campaign had evidently been quite successful, witness the relatively high number of carpenters on the 1788 subscription list. Their names, however, do not appear on the list of subscribers for a book about their own trade, nor even for an associated craft such as masonry: *De metselaar* was promised as the second volume. They are listed at the front of the *Indigobereider en blaauwverwer*, Kasteleijn's volume on the preparation of dyes, which was finally published—also a year late—as the first in Blussé's series. In his foreword the publisher tried to encourage his readers by stressing the fact that *De timmerman* (The Carpenter) was still on the production line. He even suggested that it was nearing completion:

As well as this volume, the CARPENTER, MASON and other important subjects, written by highly competent men, are in preparation; the former, indeed, is far advanced; and the public will excuse us for not publishing this volume first, as we promised in our notice of subscription; for the more comprehensive character of this work, combined with the occasional indisposition, and many other obstacles, have prevented Mr Brender à Brandis from enabling us to publish the volume.²³⁸

Blussé's reassuring words did not have the desired effect. In a foreword dating from 1791 he complained about subscribers who withdrew from the list because the publishers 'through no fault of our own, brought out another volume first, and that later than we had promised'.²³⁹ In 1806 it would seem that he had forgotten this calamity and Brender à Brandis's

²³⁷ Quotes taken from the foreword by Pieter Blussé in J. van Dalen, *De bouwkunstenaar* (The Architect) (Dordrecht 1806).

²³⁸ P.J. Kasteleijn, *De indigobereider en blaauwverwer* (Dordrecht 1788) foreword.

²³⁹ This foreword was printed at the front of P.J. Kasteleijn, *De zijdeverwer* (Dordrecht 1791).

'indispositions',²⁴⁰ although he still recalled, as clearly as if it were yesterday, the endless struggle he had with the author:

Meanwhile we repeatedly spurred Mr Brender on until, after years had passed, he sent everything back to us with the frank declaration that we could expect nothing more of him, and referred us to the architect Duivené of Amsterdam, who was more experienced and competent in this profession.²⁴¹

And so a new candidate appeared, in the person of Petrus Jezaias Duivené, a good architect and an experienced writer; around 1780 he translated a four-volume work on architecture by Sebastiaan le Clerc, illustrating it with 182 plates he engraved himself. Duivené is said to have taken over the manuscript from Brender à Brandis 'with great enthusiasm'; Blussé's hopes were rekindled that at last 'something really good' would be supplied. However, Duivené proved yet another disappointment:

We were very satisfied at the start, but it was not long before this man, too, was hindered in his work by all manner of distractions and occupations and brought to a gradual standstill in this enterprise. In the end he was cut short, and we had to console ourselves with taking back all the building materials, excerpts etc, as they were.²⁴²

Pieter's reference to the author as 'cut short' presumably refers to Duivené's unexpected death in 1801 at the age of 41. It is not clear if his successor also departed this world prematurely and thereby failed to fulfil his commission; all Blussé said was that he collaborated 'with another enthusiast' but unfortunately 'with scarcely better results'. It is possible that this anonymous 'enthusiast' was our old friend Gerrit Paape, who had written several volumes of the series anonymously and who died in 1803. There is a mysterious scrap of paper belonging to Paape in the Delft Archives, containing a calculation of sums to be paid, or possibly the number of pages per subject. Listed here we find not only 'the potter 60'—Paape's *Plateelbakker* (The Potter) had 62 pages—but also 'architect 40'.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ The poem written by G. Rijk to commemorate the author's death in 1802 also appears to refer to sickness and adversities in his life: 'Hoe, moest hij jaaren lang, door zoo veel moeilijkheden. Gehinderd in zijn doel, dat edel was en schoon,—Met eenen vasten tred op scherpe doornen treden.' ('How, year after year, beset by so many troubles, hampered in his goal, which was noble and fine, he had to walk on sharp thorns with steadfast tread.')

(G. Rijk, *Aan de nagedachtenis van* [In Memory of] *G. Brender à Brandis*, 1802).

²⁴¹ Foreword by Pieter Blussé in Van Dalen, *De bouwkunstenaar* (The Architect).

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ GA Delft, Manuscript Collection, inv. hs 38 A 4.

The carpenter and teacher of drawing, Jan van Dalen of Dordrecht, who took over next, fortunately lived to see the publication of the twenty-third volume of the *Complete Description*, which was given the title *De bouwkonstenaar* (The Architect). The manuscript which Blussé had acquired 'at considerable cost' was not wasted since Van Dalen considered it too valuable 'not to make use of':

We paid heed to the man's expert opinion and made everything available to him; and now at last we have the pleasure, thanks to his support and contributions, of publishing a work that ... may be considered unique of its kind.²⁴⁴

The proposed title—*De timmerman* (The Carpenter)—no longer described the content of this primarily theoretical volume, so it was decided to change it to *De bouwkonstenaar* (The Architect). The anonymous engravings at the back of the book, still captioned The Carpenter, however, betray both the original concept and the name of the engraver: this was Casper Philips, who had supplied Gerrit Brender à Brandis and had died in 1789. The publication of The Architect still did not entirely fulfil the original promise made to subscribers. This volume, insisted the publisher, should be considered as an introductory volume to 'the carpenter itself', which would also be written by Van Dalen and illustrated with engravings. This volume never saw the light of day.

Editorial Policy

Unlike De Félice, who goaded the authors of his *Encyclopédie* by threatening to write their contributions himself if they procrastinated for too long, Pieter Blussé—no writer, despite his impressive output of love letters—could only possess his soul in patience if his authors let him down, and, if need be, when things got too bad, look for another author, with all the delays that entailed. Furthermore, unlike the publishers of Yverdon's *Encyclopédie*, the Parisian *Encyclopédie* and the *Description des arts et métiers* he did not have one editor whose job was to streamline the entire series. As far as there was any editorial policy underlying the series, it was set by the publisher himself, who as Blussé stressed in a letter to the writer Dethierus Heynemeyer dated 1800, had personally 'undertaken much work'

²⁴⁴ Foreword by Pieter Blussé in Van Dalen, *De bouwkunstenaar*. The following quotes are also taken from this foreword.

on the series.²⁴⁵ This remark, which refers to a number of publications for which he would like to be remembered by posterity, not only points to the fact that the *Complete Description* was one of the apples of his eye, but also suggests that he was personally responsible for the final editing and possibly even finished some of the manuscripts himself. In other words, the similarities between the various volumes betray the publisher's 'finger-prints'.

The imbalance in terms of both scope and originality from which the series suffers results not from a lack of vision but from the problems Blus-sé encountered in recruiting competent authors. As we have just seen, the reservoir of writers who had both an accomplished pen and the necessary knowledge was not large. In his foreword to the first volume the publisher therefore felt obliged to apologize in advance for the concessions he had been forced to make in respect of the original plan announced in the prospectus: 'We made a miscalculation in the aforesaid announcement when we stated that each volume would contain at least 30 printed pages. Were we to comply with this promise, it would not only on this occasion, but on many more, thwart the public in its reasonable desire for works that are ready to appear.' In the choice of subject, too, vision often had to give way to pragmatism. A striking example of this is the book we have just been discussing, *The Architect*, a highly theoretical work replacing *The Carpenter*, which was to be a practical handbook for artisans.

Nonetheless, despite all the compromises, the publisher did manage to retain his original concept. As Buijnsters-Smets rightly remarks in her article on this series, there was a single framework upon which all the parts were based.²⁴⁶ There are three elements that recur to a greater or lesser degree in all the volumes—raw materials, tools and the preparation or manufacture of the product. The structure of the series was clearly based on a deliberate decision to subordinate theory to the practice of the trade concerned. And—whether the subject was the cultivation of madder, organ-building, porcelain manufacture, brewing or vinegar-making—the message in almost every volume was the same. The domestic economy of the Netherlands would revive and flourish if citizens with capital had the courage to invest in Dutch industries, if businessmen improved their methods of production and private individuals chose domestic products rather than imported goods. This message—promulgating the principles of the

²⁴⁵ UBL, Heinemeyer Collection, Ltk 1001, dated 12 May 1800.

²⁴⁶ Buijnsters-Smets, 'De "volledige beschrijving"', 479–81.

'Oecomomische Tak'—was constantly stressed in the publishers' forewords, while the authors missed no opportunity to hammer the point home to the readers. In his foreword to the volume on silkworm breeding, for instance, Blussé emphasized the usefulness of this occupation in that it provided jobs that meant 'a decent living for many people', and the author, Gerrit Paape, elaborated on this by pointing out that this labour-intensive industry 'would be able to provide work for countless idlers, unemployed families, orphans and children living off poor relief; if there is no work available baking or winding thread, they can always breed silkworms, even children who have as yet little judgment or manual dexterity'.²⁴⁷

Other volumes of the series also make the case for small-scale production methods that are easily learnt and industries that require only a small start-up capital: 'Anyone who knows how to make candles and whose circumstances permit can become a candle maker without needing any more than the tools for the job'.²⁴⁸ This did not apply, however, to the manufacture of 'truly fine' porcelain with 'a delicacy and smoothness in the shard; it would not melt in the most extreme heat and was proof against sudden fluctuation from cold to hot and vice versa ... gleaming whiteness ... harmonious colours ... and the typical semi-transparency' that characterized 'Dutch porcelain'.²⁴⁹ In this case the author requested 'men of substance' to invest their money in this capital-intensive branch of industry.²⁵⁰ The work in the delftware factories could certainly not be left to children, nor even to poorly-educated and underpaid adults:

Almost all the painted decorations are copies of those on East Indian porcelain, which themselves are already poor, more than half of them being botched up by hands that hasten to earn their daily bread, at least enough to assuage their hunger.²⁵¹

Paape, who wrote this volume, went on to put the case for better education and higher wages in this sector.

With the exception of Reisig who, unlike Paape, did not follow up his observation that the sugar refining industry paid starvation wages by proposing social reforms, the authors in this series have nothing to say about the workers themselves. Here too we may detect a consistent approach,

²⁴⁷ *De zijdenteelt* (Dordrecht 1798) 129.

²⁴⁸ P.J. Kasteleijn, *De waschbleeker en waschkaarsenmaaker* (The Wax Bleacher and Candle Maker) (Dordrecht 1792), Foreword.

²⁴⁹ P.J. Kasteleijn, *De porceleinfabriek* (The Porcelain Factory) (Dordrecht 1789) 223.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 221.

²⁵¹ G. Paape, *De plateelbakker of Delftsch aardewerkmaaker* (Dordrecht 1794) 3.

but whether this reflects a conscious choice on the part of author or publisher is debatable. This unanimously impersonal approach certainly emphasizes that the authors and presumably the publisher too, were cursed with the oversimplification—which made no allowance for human mistakes and inconsistencies—that attaches to Enlightenment ideology. As Diderot had in his *Encyclopédie*, these writers described the production process as a single static entity, stripped of the human factor, and never took into account possible complications, such as equipment breakdowns, accidents caused by misunderstandings and so forth. In this mechanistic vision the workers are mere cogs in a well-lubricated, perfectly-functioning machine. Improvement can be achieved primarily by bringing in new equipment and machinery or by using other production methods, not by better schooling.²⁵² It is only on the accompanying engravings that we glimpse the workers or the apprentices, and they only appear occasionally, chiefly to add a touch of local colour; they are even more impersonal than the figures in Diderot's encyclopaedia or those in *Les arts et métiers* because the details of the faces have become blurred in the process of copying from the original French engravings.

Another similarity between the volumes, which likewise reflects this attitude, is the lack of any interest in working conditions. Here again, though, Blussé and his authors were not unusual. Diderot paid just as little heed to the health and safety of tradesmen and factory workers.²⁵³ Even when the subject effectively forced itself upon his attention, he trivialized it. For instance, the hazard of breathing in the toxic fumes given off by some of the substances used in printing was already recognized by printers at that time, but Diderot dismissed it as a quite harmless matter. In the most extreme case, he suggests, the fumes might be dangerous to cats wandering about, which could grow dizzy and be inclined to jump out of the window.²⁵⁴ If they survived this the first time, however, these cats would become used to the fumes.²⁵⁵ Diderot's approach is diametrically opposed to that of Claude-Henri Watelet in the entry on engraving in the same *Encyclopédie*. This former tax collector promoted a machine he had invented which etched copper plates better and more safely, since it avoided direct

²⁵² Concerning these omissions in Diderot's work see J.R. Pannabecker, 'Representing mechanical arts in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*', *Technology and Culture* (1998) 33-73, esp. 42-61.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 61 ff.

²⁵⁴ We know from Darnton's research study that printers did not concern themselves greatly with the well-being of cats (Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*).

²⁵⁵ Pannabecker, 'Representing mechanical arts', 61 ff.

contact with the acid. In order to introduce this new method he even offered in his encyclopaedia entry to demonstrate the machine to anyone who was interested, or to send them illustrations upon request.²⁵⁶

There was also more knowledge about and concern for safety in the Republic than one might suspect from reading the *Complete Description*. As early as 1700 the Italian scholar Bernardino Ramazzini published a standard work on occupational diseases, *De Morbis Artificum Diatriba*, subsequently translated into English as *Diseases of Workers*. The Dutch translation of this work, more than 400 pages long, went into three editions.²⁵⁷ Blussé's authors could have found out everything they needed to know about the health hazards of the trade they were describing and about remedies for the occupational diseases they caused. And yet there is nothing in Buijs's volume on brewing about the dangers of chronic drunkenness among workers. Ramazzini had written: 'just as men may be inflamed by beer and brandy and blame this upon the hop, so also those who prepare these drinks, ferment them and put them into barrels are troubled by headaches, dizziness and tightness of the chest'. There were possible remedies for this: 'absinthe, rue, milk, fried lungs of animals, water with vinegar, sour apples and medicinal preparations'—but there is no mention of them in Buijs.²⁵⁸ He does not even refer to Ramazzini's suggestion that employers who were unwilling to spend much money on the health of their workers could at least ameliorate 'their pitiable state' by giving them 'cabbage ... radishes, water and vinegar'.²⁵⁹ Ramazzini's six-page treatise on the 'diseases of potters' likewise fell on deaf ears.²⁶⁰ In his book on the potter, *Plateelbakker*, Paape said not a word about the occupational diseases of this group: 'first, trembling hands, then they become paralyzed, melancholy, lethargic, a bad colour, toothless'.²⁶¹ Similarly, in his volume on silkworm breeding he made no mention of the stench associated with clearing dead and half-rotting silkworms: 'the workers who do this job are frequently plagued by a harsh cough accompanied by very painful breathing, and few of them live to be old'.²⁶²

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 61.

²⁵⁷ [B. Ramazzini] *Historische, natuur- en geneeskundige verhandeling van de ziekten der konstenaars, ambagts-lieden en handwerkers* (3rd edition, Leiden 1744). My thanks to Rudolf Dekker for drawing my attention to Ramazzini's work.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 179–81.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 34.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 34–39.

²⁶² Ibid., 211.

Presumably the important silk manufacturer in Dordrecht to whom this volume was dedicated would not have been overjoyed to read a vivid description of the malodorousness of his factory: 'It is quite remarkable that the droppings of so tiny a creature, when it is alive and fed on mulberry leaves, if left to lie and piled in heaps until they rot, thereafter give off such an unbearable stench when they are touched that they contaminate an entire neighbourhood.'²⁶³ It must have been equally unpleasant in the vicinity of tanneries, including the one owned by Wopko Cnoop, to whom *De leerlooyer* was dedicated:

I have not infrequently observed that there is no force or strength that can be exerted to make horses go past these places, and that as soon as they sniff this stink they turn as if out of their senses, will not answer to the reins, and gallop for home.²⁶⁴

There is not a word in Blussé's series, however, about 'labourers with deathly pale faces, swollen, a grey-blue tint to their skin, wheezy and almost all of them afflicted with melancholia,' who Ramazzini describes.²⁶⁵ Although industrial safety was not an issue in the eighteenth century as it is today—for over a century Ramazzini's book was the only standard work on occupational diseases in Dutch—presumably this blind spot on the part of the authors of the *Complete Description* was a conscious decision on their part and that of the publisher. One of the aims of the series, after all, was that it should function as an advertisement for national industry and stimulate the Dutch economy. Viewed in this light, it would hardly have been appropriate to wash the dirty or, more accurately, stinking linen in public. Besides, as has been suggested, it might scare off potential 'sponsors'.

Sponsorship

Many of the individual volumes in Blussé's *Complete Description of Trades and Occupations* are dedicated to entrepreneurs operating in the sector concerned or one allied to it, and it would therefore seem safe to assume that we are looking here at an early form of sponsorship. The volume on soap-boiling, for instance, was dedicated to 'Willem Noodt Esq., soap-boiler of Delft', while the book on paper manufacture was addressed to the greater glory of 'Messrs Blauw and Briel, renowned paper manufacturers

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 100.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

of Wormerveer' and incidentally, regular suppliers to the firm of Blussé. The volume on delftware was proffered 'with warm wishes for all that is good' to, among others, Lambert Sanderus, owner of the Delft pottery *De porceleynse claeuw*; the volume on silkworm breeding was dedicated to the Dordrecht silk manufacturer Anthonij Balthasar van den Brandeler; while Hendrik van Beek, owner of Rotterdam's vinegar factory De Eendracht, was saluted in the book on vinegar making, *De azijnmaaker*. Other worthies whose occupations are not mentioned prove on further investigation to have interests in the branch of industry concerned. For instance, Jan Hendrik van Meeteren, to whom the *The Sugar Refiner* was dedicated in 1793, was no doubt Pieter Blussé's 'very good friend', as he was described in the foreword, but since 1785 he had also been joint owner of Van Meeteren & Co., a Dordrecht sugar refinery and trading company dealing in sugar and syrup.²⁶⁶ Nowhere in the dedication does it emerge that the Blussé family had itself invested in this branch, but we may deduce it from an exchange of letters between two of Pieter's sons in 1809, where falling sugar prices are the subject of constant concern:

I congratulate you on the rise in the Fr[ench] shares on the assumption that you will have benefited from it. I also hope for a small profit from it. ... But now how about the sugar, how about mine?²⁶⁷

Although there has not as yet been a systematic study into the operation of a system of patronage in the Republic, there are indications that dedicating a book was generally linked to a material reward: the chosen one was expected to pay for the honour.²⁶⁸ This is apparent in eighteenth-century Dutch usage, in which the words 'maecenas' and 'patron' were interchangeable and 'patron' was defined as the person who accepted the dedication of a book.²⁶⁹ It is also apparent from several publishers' contracts which

²⁶⁶ GAD, Notarial acts, B. van der Star, inv. 1311, dated 16 August 1786. See also the same archive inv. 1431, dated, 31 April 1791: division of the estate of Mattheus van Meteren.

²⁶⁷ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 29, letter from Abraham Blussé Junior to Adolph Blussé dated 12 May 1809. Until 1800, Dordrecht, Rotterdam and Amsterdam combined had the largest sugar market in the Northern Netherlands. This collapsed completely during the French period (H.T. Colenbrander, *Inlijving en opstand* (Amsterdam 1911) 81-84).

²⁶⁸ See P.J. Verkruijsse, 'Holland gedecideerd. Boekopdrachten in Holland in de 17e eeuw', *Holland* 23 (1991) 225; *ibid.*, 'Het boekmecenaat in de zeventiende eeuw', *De zeventiende eeuw* 6 (1990) 137-43; J.J.V.M. de Vet, 'Maecenaat in de pruijken tijd' in *Handelingen Nederlands philologisch congres* 38 (1984) 149-75; M. Mathijssen, 'Literaire subsidies in de negentiende eeuw?' *Nederlandse letterkunde* 1 (1996) 84-101.

²⁶⁹ In this connection De Vet studied several dictionaries: 'Maecenaat in de pruijken tijd' (The role of the patron in the periwig period), 151.

are at pains to specify whether the right of dedication falls to the author or the publisher.²⁷⁰ No such contracts have been discovered in the Blussé archives. The inventory drawn up for Pieter Blussé in 1823 is the only hint we have of a practice in which there was a quid pro quo for the honour of having a book dedicated to one. Pieter's estate included 'a small chased silver casket presented to our grandfather by Mrs Bogaert of Alblasterdam, for the dedication to her of his book of poems *Iets Dichtmatigs*, and acquired from Grandfather's estate by Father for 80 guilders'.²⁷¹ The small casket also encapsulates the fragility of this system of remuneration; it was dependent on personal whim. A token of appreciation was evidently one of the unwritten rules of the game, but it was up to the patron to offer what he or she saw fit.²⁷² The quid pro quo could be hard cash, but it might equally take the form of an invitation to a banquet, a job, a present of books, or even, as happened to the Rotterdam artist Adriaen van der Werff, a delivery of wild boar.²⁷³ The Blussé family was evidently never reduced to having to sell off the valuable silver casket; the same could probably not be said of the penniless apothecary P.J. Kasteleijn, whose contributions to Blussé's *Complete Description*, dedicated to the *Oeconomische Tak*, netted him considerable praise and a gold medal in 1789.²⁷⁴ A similar honour had already been bestowed on the publisher himself in 1786 for his efforts in publishing a series so enthusiastically expounding the society's ideals.²⁷⁵ On 7 October 1786 Blussé announced in a large advertisement in the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* that he felt so strongly supported by a recent decision of the *Oeconomische Tak* that he now entertained not the slightest doubt about the completion of his series.

The initial participation of so many, and the most esteemed and excellent decision taken in the most recent General Meeting of the *Oeconomische*

²⁷⁰ De Vet, 'Maecenaat in de pruikentijd', 158.

²⁷¹ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 51, inventory dated 15 June 1823.

²⁷² This uncertainty did not diminish in the early nineteenth century, when for the first time there was structural government financial support for literature. Mathijssen compares the uncertainties of authors and publishers to those facing a couple in the early days of their engagement (Mathijssen, 'Literaire subsidies', 98).

²⁷³ De Vet, 'Maecenaat in de pruikentijd', 155.

²⁷⁴ He was given the gold medal 'for his translation into Dutch of a work on marketing, of great importance to Netherlands manufacturers ... whereby he had greatly assisted the attempts of the Oeconomischen Tak ... and also to encourage him in his praiseworthy work of chemical experiment, from which flowed forth so many useful products' (RANH, Archief Oeconomische Tak, *Resolutiën* 1787 (Haarlem, s.a.) 822-23).

²⁷⁵ RANH, Archief Oeconomische Tak, *Resolutiën genomen by de agtste algemeene vergaderinge des Oeconomischen Taks* (Haarlem, s.a.) 649.

Tak, and most especially the voluntary offer on the part of various skilled Artists and Manufacturers in our country to contribute to the accomplishment of this project, all serve to provide the above-mentioned publishers with the most pleasing expectation that they will not only be able to commence the undertaking of this work, so highly beneficial to the encouragement of national diligence and industry, but also carry it through to the completion envisioned by the publishers in the prospectus.

This advertisement suggests widespread support and approval for Blussé's enterprise in the form of generous subsidies from both the directors of the society and individual members, who had approached rattling their purses and waving their trade secrets. But if we take the time to read the minutes of that particular meeting of the society, the reality appears considerably less rosy.

The immediate reason for placing Blussé's series on the meeting's agenda was a campaigning letter from the Dordrecht Lutheran minister, Johannes Tissel, who proposed on behalf of the local branch of the *Oeconomische Tak* that the society should support Blussé's *Complete Description* in every possible way. Under normal circumstances, Pieter Blussé himself, as secretary of this branch of the society, would have made the proposal—but in this case he might have been suspected of a vested interest. Thus, by way of exception, another member of the society took his place. Tissel was able without embarrassment to record that the Dordrecht branch of the society did not doubt that the national meeting would greet Blussé's initiative with delight:

We felt immediately that his plan, with a happy implementation, would contribute not a little to the promotion of a prominent aim of the praiseworthy *Oeconomische Tak*, and for this reason judge the same doubly worthy of the attention and patronage of the next General Meeting, which is why we have therefore had no objection to authorizing our Representatives (who have charged themselves with providing a sufficient number of transcripts of the draft for Your Honours and the members) to make the necessary recommendation to this effect and to report to Your Honours beforehand, and to consult with Your Honours about the most appropriate occasion and manner, and at the same time to request your favourable influence and recommendation, for the greatest advancement of this in every way useful objective.²⁷⁶

The letter is followed by the remark that the publisher 'will be not a little encouraged' by the support of and a positive recommendation from the

²⁷⁶ RANH, Archive *Oeconomische Tak*, inv. 35B/12 (letter to the editor), dated 15 July 1786.

Oeconomische Tak. And who could better predict the reactions of the publisher than the author of the letter? The epistle may well be signed by 'Johannes Tissel' but the handwriting is identical to that of the publisher himself, Pieter Blussé. It is highly unlikely that the Lutheran minister, an active member and indeed the chairman of the Dordrecht branch of the *Oeconomische Tak*,²⁷⁷ was unaware of the letter written in his name. A much more plausible picture is that of an overstretched clergyman with too many calls on his time nodding his assent, quite ready to acknowledge that when it came to writing campaigning letters, Pieter Blussé was his superior.²⁷⁸ On closer examination, the delegate announced in this letter, armed with Tissel's letter of recommendation and a stack of prospectuses for Blussé's series, also proves to be an insider. In order to avoid the slightest suspicion of bias, it was not, as was customary, Pieter Blussé who attended the national meeting of the *Oeconomische Tak* on 26 July 1786, but his father Abraham Blussé.²⁷⁹ Pieter, himself, in his capacity as secretary, did not spring into action again until 1 August, when he proposed to the committee that he draw up a new list of local secretaries, and asked for names and addresses for this purpose.²⁸⁰ Undoubtedly, such a new list would be very useful to the society. But it was, of course, no less useful to Pieter in his campaign to acquire subscribers for his new series, which was steeped in the ideals of the *Oeconomische Tak*. And such a campaign was needed. The support of the national meeting, which was granted in July after lengthy consultations, and which Pieter Blussé mentions so enthusiastically in his advertisement, was no more than the promise to subscribe for one copy of *The Complete Description*.²⁸¹ In financial terms this did not achieve very much. It becomes apparent from the minutes of later meetings that his

²⁷⁷ Unfortunately there are no records in the Dordrecht municipal archive referring to the Dordrecht branch of the *Oeconomische Tak*. Lists of names of Dordrecht members can be found in RANH, Archive *Oeconomische Tak*, inv. 28, vol. 24.4, dated 23 May 1778 (letter from Pieter Blussé as secretary, amendment to the list also by Pieter Blussé dated 14 November 1786).

²⁷⁸ From 1788 onwards, Johannes Tissel had a number of works published by A. Blussé & Son, including the six-volume life of Christ *Leerredenen over de gewigtigste gebeurtenissen uit het leven van Jezus Christus*, the first two volumes of which had been published by F. Wanner in 1786.

²⁷⁹ RANH, Archive *Oeconomische Tak*, *Resolutiën genomen by de agtste algemeene vergaderinge des Oeconomischen Taks* (Haarlem, s.a.) 649.

²⁸⁰ On 14 November of that year he did indeed receive the list (RANH, Archive *Oeconomische Tak*, inv. 16, dated 1 August 1786 and 14 November 1786)

²⁸¹ RANH, Archive *Oeconomische Tak*, *Resolutiën genomen by de agtste algemeene vergaderinge des Oeconomischen Taks* (Haarlem, s.a.) 649.

investment in goodwill in the society actually cost Pieter more than he earned from it. In 1789 it was noted that the first three volumes of Blussé's series 'pursuant to the subscription in the name of the *Oeconomischen Tak*' had arrived 'and furthermore as a present from Mr Blussé of Dordrecht a copy of the same work in a half-calf binding'.²⁸² The indirect support of the *Oeconomische Tak*, which accepted the dedication in the first volume and expressed its approval of the series in its meeting, was probably of greater value.

Pieter's gift to the National Assembly of yet another free copy of his series in February 1797—when the *Oeconomische Tak* was already essentially moribund—must, at least in part, have had the same aim of attracting publicity. But if he had hoped for a small subsidy from this recently-established and first national 'people's' representative group, he was disappointed. His gift was received with gratitude, passed round to a few members, men of standing like Cornelis van Lennep, Willem Hendrik Teding van Berkhout, Jan Bernd Bicker, Nicolaas Jan Ockhuysen, Johannes Lublink the Younger and Bernardus Nieuhoff, and duly noted in the Register of the Proceedings of the National Assembly, a copy of which was sent to Pieter.²⁸³ After a new group of representatives had arrived in the National Assembly, following two coups in 1798, Pieter made another attempt to associate his series with this body. He dedicated the sixteenth volume, *De bierbrouwer en mouter* (The Brewer and Maltster), published in 1799, to 'the representative body of the Batavian people and its executive government'. In a lengthy foreword the publisher detailed the sacrifices he had made in order to ensure the continuation of his series:

I had to contend with many prejudices, endure endless disappointments, and incur much expense and, though I say so myself, without the most tenacious patience my enterprise would no sooner have begun than it would have been abandoned. At last, however, I had the pleasure of bringing out the first volume on the preparation of indigo and blue dye. I took heart, redoubled my efforts and now have the pleasure of publishing the sixteenth volume, *The Brewer and Maltster* and dedicating it to you, CITIZENS' REPRESENTATIVES AND GOVERNORS.²⁸⁴

He went on to emphasize his loyalty to the new governing body and his great confidence in it, but this came at a price:

²⁸² Ibid., Resolutiën 1789, 946.

²⁸³ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 61.

²⁸⁴ J. Buys, *De bierbrouwer en mouter* (Dordrecht 1799) foreword.

And who could be more appropriate recipients than you, who have earned the trust and confidence of your fellow citizens and been charged with the task of safeguarding their most important interests, who not only have the means placed in your hands but have also declared your readiness to open all the blocked sources of Dutch prosperity—the dilapidated factories, industries, arts and trades—and, in a word, to restore and improve the ailing state of our beloved Fatherland with every appropriate means of protection and recompense; and since I trust completely your understanding of these matters, I am confident that you will look upon my difficult enterprise with a token of your appreciation.²⁸⁵

With this request that the members of the National Assembly would look on his enterprise ‘with a token of your appreciation,’ Pieter may have been referring to his hope that they would accept a dedication, which presumably was not a matter of course.²⁸⁶ Equally, it may have been a blatant request for subsidy. This was a period when governments in France and the Dutch Republic alike were trying to stimulate culture ‘with a most beneficial influence.’ In France this was a reaction to the flood of pulp fiction which had supposedly overwhelmed the market after regulatory mechanisms like the guilds and state censorship had been abolished.²⁸⁷ It is quite possible that people feared the same thing after the guilds were abolished in the Dutch Republic in 1798. At the same time as the Executive Council was established on 12 June 1798, a government department was founded to supervise National Education, one of whose many tasks was to direct cultural policy. Thus, for instance, the instructions for this department, drawn up in 1799, included making a survey of the ‘state of literature in our Fatherland and the means that could be employed to improve this.’²⁸⁸ One of these ‘means’ was the provision of money. In the archives of the Agency there are a large number of written requests for subsidy, in particular to assist with theatrical productions and literary publications; it seems that these were more often refused than granted.²⁸⁹ We do not find such a direct request from Blussé in the archive, although his firm did present a few copies of some of the schoolbooks on his list, as did his fellow-publisher

²⁸⁵ Ibid..

²⁸⁶ See Mathijssen, ‘Literaire subsidies’.

²⁸⁷ See C. Hesse, *Publishing and Cultural Politics in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1810* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/Oxford 1991).

²⁸⁸ *Instructiën voor de agenten van het Uitvoerend Bewind der Bataafsche Republiek* (The Hague 1799) 88-89. See also H. Boels, *Binnenlandse zaken. Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van een departement in de Bataafse tijd 1795-1806* (Groningen 1993) 222-23.

²⁸⁹ ARA II, Archive of the Department of Home Affairs 1796-1813, inv. 330-31. I thank Benny Pratasik for drawing my attention to this archive.

P. den Hengst; for Blussé this merely had the frustrating outcome that while he received no more than a word of thanks, Den Hengst was rewarded with an appointment as permanent book supplier.²⁹⁰

It is hard to say how Blussé fared with his dedications to individual entrepreneurs. In the absence of company archives and correspondence dealing with such matters we have to make do with a significant remark made by the publisher in his first foreword of 1788, two years after the niggardly contribution of the *Oeconomische Tak*—a subscription to a single copy of the series. Blussé wrote that not only was he disappointed in the lack of enthusiasm for his series among subscribers but also that ‘so little real support and assistance’ had been forthcoming ‘from the other side’ that ‘on more than one occasion we considered shelving our entire plan and giving up the idea. However, there were others who, with their most complimentary and consoling words, encouraged us to continue, and indeed, did not stop at mere words.’²⁹¹ In a foreword written four years after this, however, Blussé had also become disappointed in these ‘others’:

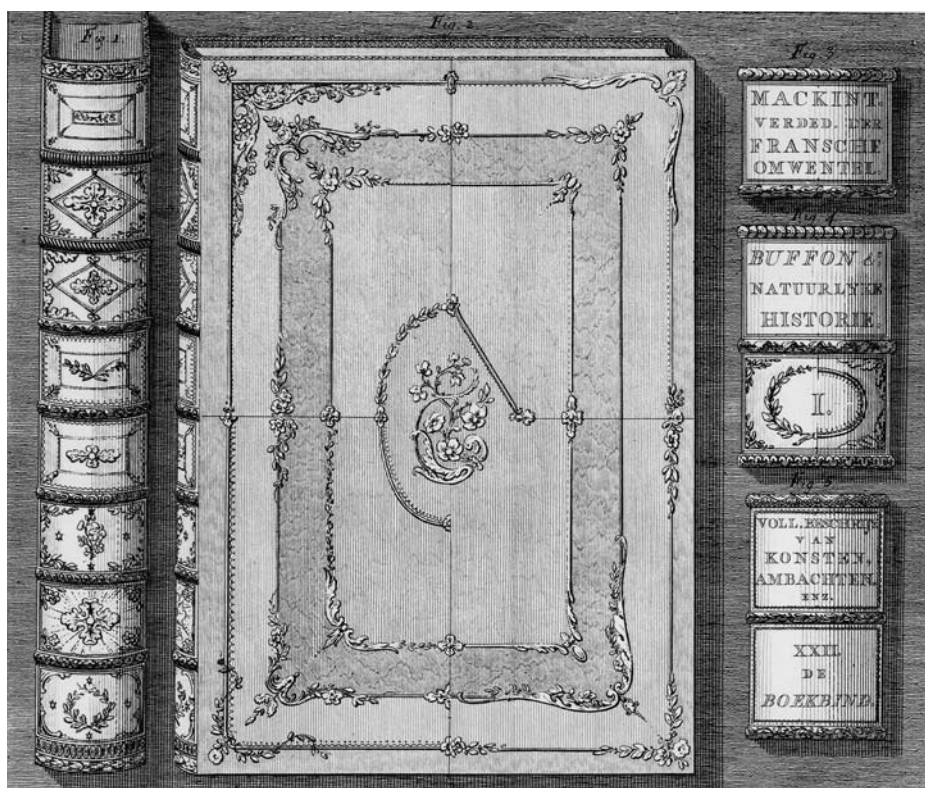
Our honoured public may well have gained the impression that we had abandoned our original plan of publishing *Een Volledige Beschrijving van alle Konsten, Ambachten, Handwerken enz.* (A Complete Description of all Trades and Occupations, etc.); and indeed, the passage of time between the publication of this and the previous volumes certainly warranted such a conclusion. More than once we ourselves despaired of achieving our goal, in part because we were hampered by endless obstacles and setbacks, and in part because all our efforts, expense and attempts, together with those of a small number of friends, to continue with this project—which in other countries, being of the same manifest usefulness, was not only supported and sponsored by the most distinguished societies, but also encouraged and aided with moneys from the state or the royal coffers—seemed scarcely to attract the notice of our nation.²⁹²

With the mention of ‘others’ (who later dwindled to ‘a few friends’) whose encouragement was not confined to words, Blussé was in all probability referring to the group of people to whom, over the years, the various volumes of his series were dedicated. Their support may have been financial, but could equally have been contributions to the books themselves: information about the production methods used in their business, or even the revelation of trade secrets. I shall return later to this complex question. We

²⁹⁰ Ibid., inv. 330, 16; ibid., inv. 299, dated 3 June 1799; ibid. inv. 331, dated 12 March 1800.

²⁹¹ Kasteleijn, *De indigobereider*, foreword.

²⁹² P.J. Kasteleijn, *De zijdeverwer* (Dordrecht 1791) foreword.



26. An interesting sample of sly 18th-century advertising. Depiction of book bindings and backs with titles from Blussé's list, appearing in Hendrik de Haas's *De boekbinder* ('The Bookbinder') (Dordrecht 1806). National Library, The Hague.

have not, though, reached the end of all the possible motives that played a part in Blussé's dedications to his volumes of the *Complete Description*. If we explore the backgrounds of the individuals upon whom praise is heaped in these forewords, we realize that Blussé put this opportunity to very creative use: in some cases he settled accounts that were still open, in others he secured political support, in yet others he establish a political profile for himself as a publisher, and sometimes it was a combination of all these motives.

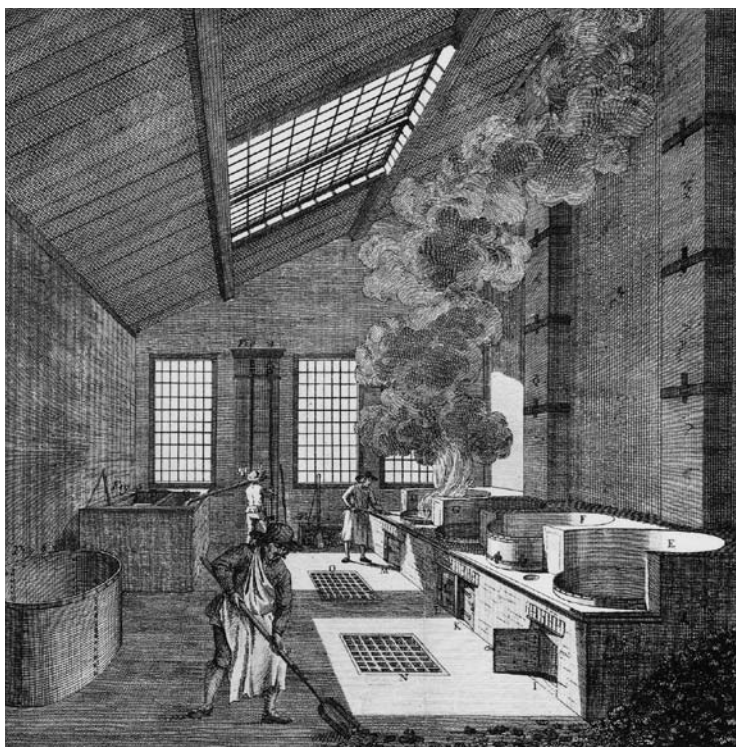
An amalgam of motives

Pieter's dedication of the book on silkworm breeding to the Dordrecht silk manufacturer Anthony Balthasar van den Brandeler in 1798 is a good ex-

ample of his mixed motives. What first springs to mind is that he had a financial objective. It would not seem too far-fetched to suppose that a wealthy manufacturer would reward a flattering mention in the dedication of a standard work on his own field—a very distinguished form of advertising—with at least a contribution towards the production costs. All the more so considering that the book put the case for administrative measures favouring the sector—something Van den Brandeler had advocated in the past without success. Paape's suggestion in the book that silk manufacturing promoted employment, since even children could be put to work, must have been music to Van den Brandeler's ears. He was one of a group of entrepreneurs who in 1785 had put pressure on the governors of the Dordrecht Reformed Church Poor School to allow as many children as possible to leave school prematurely because 'they were desperately needed in all kinds of occupations'. This request was repeated in 1793, specifically with regard to his silk manufactory because of the urgent demand 'for young hands to carry out the work there'.²⁹³ If we dig a little deeper, we find that Pieter Blussé had already had reason to be grateful to Van den Brandeler for something that happened several decades earlier. In 1770 and 1771 he had published *Kabinet van Nederlandsche en Kleefsche oudheden* (A Cabinet of Antiquities from the Netherlands and Cleves) which was dedicated to this same regent, entrepreneur and son of the postmaster François van den Brandeler, 'as a token of the highest esteem, in recognition of the many acts of favour and as a mark of our enduring commitment'.²⁹⁴ For generations the Blussé family had been granted the post, so crucial to the expansion of their book trade, of clerk of the post office controlled by the Van den Brandeler family; this must surely have contributed to the feelings of 'enduring commitment'. In 1769, immediately after his apprenticeship to the Amsterdam bookseller Loveringh, Pieter Blussé was appointed ensign in the Dordrecht civic guard company, a group of notables whom the Blussé family had not previously been invited to join. For this favour too, Blussé had Van den Brandeler to thank—he was captain of the company at the

²⁹³ Esseboom, *Onderwysinghe der jeught*, 117, 119–20. On 19 March 1794 some young workers from the silk manufacturers Van den Brandeler & Compagnie were presented with prizes for exemplary conduct by the *Oeconomische Tak*. In the words of the chairman's address: 'Human beings are given understanding above that of the beasts; they have arms and legs and these must be kept busy, for if a person is not doing good, then he is necessarily doing evil' (GAD, FA Repelaer van Puttershoek, inv. 36). I thank Cees Esseboom for allowing me to consult his notes.

²⁹⁴ A. Rademaker, *Kabinet van Nederlandsche en Kleefsche oudheden* (6 vols.; Dordrecht 1770–1771).



27. Engraving in P.J. Kasteleijn's *De sterkwaterstooker, zoutzuur- en vitrioolöliebereider* (Dordrecht 1788). The plate was traced from or drawn after plate II of J.F. Demachy's *L'art du distillateur*, vol. 12 of *Description des arts et métiers* (Paris 1773). National Library, The Hague.

time.²⁹⁵ Nor was Pieter Blussé any less appreciative in 1784, when he accepted several expensive drums on behalf of the Patriot militia *De Vrijheid* (Liberty) and made a stirring speech to the 'women of our Fatherland' who had presented them. One of the ladies was Van den Brandeler's wife, Cornelia Rees.²⁹⁶

Although Anthony van den Brandeler came from the patrician class of Dutch regents, had been a sheriff, a member of the Council of Eight Good Men, a member of the Provincial Executive and elected burgomaster in 1784, as far as Pieter was concerned he had his heart in the right place. He was sympathetic towards the Patriots and in 1784 caused an uproar among

²⁹⁵ See chapter 1.

²⁹⁶ Paape, *De geschiedenis der gewapende burgercorpsen in Nederland*, 57.

the other regents by proposing that the hereditary right to certain positions should be curtailed. After the 1795 revolution he, like Pieter Blussé, was elected councillor; after the radical coup in January 1798 they were both thrown off the council.²⁹⁷ By dedicating a book to this benefactor, kindred spirit and companion in adversity, and by doing so in 1798, Pieter managed most successfully to kill quite a number of birds with one stone.

Jan Hendrik van Meeteren, the sugar manufacturer to whom Pieter Blussé dedicated *De suikerraffinadeur* (The Sugar Refiner) in 1793, was also present at the celebrations of *De Vrijheid* in 1784. The honour fell to him, as co-founder of the Society, to present the gift to Pieter Blussé on behalf of the Women of the Fatherland.²⁹⁸ In that year he also became a member of the council of Forty Good Men, from which he voluntarily withdrew in 1786 to make room for a government which, in the eyes of the Patriots, was more democratically chosen and included men like Pieter and Abraham Blussé.²⁹⁹ His explanatory statement concerning this action was cited with great enthusiasm, and not without reason, by Abraham Blussé in a letter to the editor of the newspaper *Post van de Nederrijn*.³⁰⁰ For Van Meteren, like Van den Brandeler, was a kind of bridgehead between the old caste of regents and the revolutionary Patriots. He was a kindred spirit in more ways than one, for as well as the political affinity, Van Meteren and Pieter were both active members of the Dordrecht branch of the *Oeconomische Tak*³⁰¹ and he was in fact one of Pieter's closest friends. In Pieter's letter to Cornelis de Gijsselaar written in 1793 he is mentioned in the same breath as Pieter van Beest—'my mates Jan and Pieter'—who are described as his two constant friends.³⁰² Indeed, he was also invited to share the contents of the quite intimate letter from J.F. Hoijsman written in that same year, a discussion of the merits of a selection of Dordrecht beauties. Hoijsman concluded his letter by asking Pieter to show it to 'our friend Mr van Meeteren'.³⁰³

²⁹⁷ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 51: Register of the members of the Council on 1 July 1797. For more about him see *Jaarboek voor den Nederlandschen adel* (The Hague/Brussels 1903-1904) 31-33. In 1796 he and Pieter Blussé were both members of a committee set up to create a code of regulations for the city of Dordrecht (GAD, Nieuw stadsarchief 1795-1813, inv. 1, p. 102).

²⁹⁸ Paape, *De geschiedenis der gewapende burgercorpsen in Nederland*, 58-60.

²⁹⁹ See chapter 3.

³⁰⁰ *De Post van de NederRhijn* nr. 483, 9 August 1786, 129-44, esp. 141-43.

³⁰¹ RANH, Archives of the Oeconomische Tak, inv. 28, vol. 24.4, 23 May 1778.

³⁰² See chapter 3.

³⁰³ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 2, 29-8-1793.

It seems unlikely that at that time Pieter Blussé was on such intimate terms with the Dordrecht merchant and oil refiner Henri François de Court, the man to whom he dedicated the book on distilling, *De sterkwaterstooker, zoutzuur- en vitrioolbereider*, in 1788. Whereas in the dedication to Van Meteren Pieter addresses him as his 'dear friend', De Court had to settle for a 'token of his esteem'. It was not until 1799, when Pieter's oldest son Abraham Junior married De Court's niece, that the two families became linked.³⁰⁴ And Pieter's support as owner of the manor of Oud-Alblas for the nomination of this former judge, ex-councillor and vice-consul to Denmark and Norway, as a member of the polder board for the newly-created district of Nederwaard lay even further in the future—in 1821. But as early as 1788 there was sufficient reason for Pieter Blussé to honour De Court by dedicating a book to him. Like Pieter and Jan Hendrik van Meteren, he was a member of the Dordrecht division of the *Oeconomische Tak*,³⁰⁵ and his wife was one of the benefactresses of *De Vrijheid*.³⁰⁶ Undoubtedly a member of the regent class, he was nonetheless on the 'right side' in the Patriot period, witness his appointment as sheriff after the 1795 revolution and the fact that in 1786 the masters of the guilds nominated him—along with Pieter Blussé and G. Schotel—as a member of a municipal council known as the Eight Good Men. Blussé and Schotel were passed over by the stadholder in favour of De Court, which makes it clear that he, more even than Van Meteren, was an intermediary. Thus, unlike Van den Brandeler, Van Meteren and Pieter Blussé, De Court was able to remain firmly in the saddle after the Orangist counter-coup in 1787. This was naturally all the more reason for Pieter to seek some form of protection from this powerful figure, with his ambiguous political loyalties—particularly in 1788, when the persecution of Patriots was at its height. De Court had a talent for camouflage, which stood him in good stead in 1808. In that year an anonymous informant of the Minister of Justice had his name put on a list of '438 prominent citizens' suspected of being ill-disposed towards the regime. After some enquiry most of them were labelled 'fervent Orangist, plotter and despicable person', like the Amsterdam lawyer M. Calkoen, or 'hardened fanatical Orangist', like Gijsbert Carel van Hogendorp, or 'revolutionary Patriot, cunning plotter, dangerous person', as the Amsterdam merchant O. Ockerse

³⁰⁴ Abraham Blussé married Jeanne Petronella Maizonnet, daughter of Cornelia de Court, who was Henri François de Court's sister. See chapter 5.

³⁰⁵ On 19 March 1778 he became a member of the *Oeconomische Tak* (RANH, Archive of the *Oeconomische Tak*, inv. 24.4, dated 24 March 1778).

³⁰⁶ Paape, *De geschiedenis der gewapende burgercorpsen in Nederland*, 57.

was described. De Court, however, 'consul and merchant', remained an enigma: 'true feelings unknown, but a malcontent'.³⁰⁷

As a prominent member of the Patriot Free Corps and secretary of the council of war, Wopco Cnoop, the tanner from the town of Bolsward to whom Blussé dedicated the book on leather tanning, *De leerlooyer, leertouwer, wit- en zeemlooyer* in 1789, was a good deal easier to place on the political spectrum. This was unfortunate for him, for after the Orangist coup of 27 September 1787 a mob of angry Orangists dragged him out of his house and 'on account of his patriotism' incarcerated him for two years in the Leeuwarden blockhouse.³⁰⁸ His conduct during the 'Patriot Spring' had been such that it was pointless for him to deny the charges brought against him. Not only had he signed many controversial petitions (often ones that he himself had initiated) but he had also had the courage to remain at his post to the last, doing armed duty as lieutenant of the civic guard. A comment in a letter to his daughters reveals his realistic attitude: 'in my case it's either an iron chain or a gold one, more than for most people'.³⁰⁹ On 11 September 1789 he was released from the blockhouse (one of the last of his group to be set free) to pack his belongings, and sit out his ten-year exile from the province.³¹⁰ He made his way to Amsterdam where he met P.J. Kasteleijn, author of *De leerlooyer* (The Tanner) to whom he had previously given some useful advice—as Kasteleijn emphasized in his Preface—about the finer points of leather tanning. Presumably Cnoop had passed his years in prison not only in writing his memoirs which he titled *Elendig dagverhaal* (wretched diary), sharpening quill pens, knitting and knotting a vast collection of muffs, bags and purses for his daughters—enough as he jokingly suggested, for them to open a haberdashery;³¹¹ we may also assume that he was the author of the *Nederduitsch origineel handschrift ...* (Original Manuscript in Dutch, being a description most clearly set forth and based upon practice of the occupation in the Netherlands of tanning and rope-making) on which Kasteleijn had based his book. This manuscript was probably part of a desperate attempt on Cnoop's part to keep his tan-

³⁰⁷ ARA II, Collection 18 C.F. van Maanen (1895), inv. 35. This list 'defines' among others 39 people from Dordrecht; Pieter Blussé's rival bookseller P. van Braam is described as a 'fanatic Orangist and as such a great malcontent'.

³⁰⁸ C. Kroes-Lichtenberg, 'Wopke Cnoop, een Friese patriot', *De Vrije Fries* XLV (1953) 112-44, 125-29. His work 'Elendig dagverhaal' (wretched diary) can be found in RA Groningen, FA Vissering, Wiemann, Cnoop et al. 14.

³⁰⁹ Kroes-Lichtenberg, 'Wopke Cnoop', 128.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 141.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 131.

nery going while he was in prison. We know that he gave his daughter Riemke a crash course in leather-tanning from his prison cell so that she could pass on accurate instructions to her father's illiterate apprentice Jurjen.³¹² We may also assume that the anonymous section on the trade of candle-maker was a product of Cnoop's tedious days in prison, since he is thanked for his 'generous assistance and experienced instruction' in both *The Tanner* and 'a subsequent piece'.³¹³ A word of thanks from the publisher for both anonymous pieces in the form of a dedication was no more than polite. In view of Pieter Blussé's political background there is more than a hint of triumph in his 'good wishes for much desired prosperity and assurances of particular esteem' to Cnoop, newly released from gaol. It was a cautious political statement from a publisher who, as he wrote to his friend De Gijsselaar, was trying to survive the years of Orangist restoration, 'in the hope of better times'.

And was it pure chance that volume eight of the series, *De zijdeverwer* of 1791, was also dedicated to a Frisian Patriot just released from prison? This was the Frisian minister, Pieter Brouwer, indicted in 1787 by the Frisian court for his Patriot activities. He was accused of calling on the members of the Frisian Free Corps, at a meeting in the tavern at Blijla on 18 September 1787, to gather their weapons together and take them to Franeker, where they would be safer. In 1791, however, he was acquitted for lack of evidence.³¹⁴ This time, however, it was not the publisher but the author of the volume, P.J. Kasteleijn, who worded the dedication 'in token of his great esteem'.

In the years leading up to 1800 the various volumes of Blussé's *Complete Description* were dedicated to a somewhat curious mixture of people—who nevertheless, with all their differences, have one thing in common. All of them, like Blussé's authors, translators and editors, were prominent Patriots. The Delft potter Lambertus Sanderus (maker of delftware) to whom Paape's book *Plateelbakker* (The Potter) of 1794 is dedicated, was a leading Delft Patriot. After the Patriot coup of 1787 he, like the radical Reyer van den Bosch, was a member of Delft city council, and after the Batavian

³¹² Ibid., 132.

³¹³ Prisoners were permitted to send for the books they needed (Kroes-Ligtenberg, 'Wopke Cnoop', 131).

³¹⁴ J. van Sluis, 'Predikanten en patriotten' in W. Bergsma, C. Bosma and M.G. Buist eds, *For uws lan, wyv en bern. De patriottentijd in Friesland* (Leeuwarden 1987) 86-98, 95-96. Elias and Schölvinck, *Volksrepresentanten en wetgevers*, 52-53.

revolution of 1795 he was part of the provisional government in Delft.³¹⁵ Also in the governing body was Pieter Blussé's cousin, the soap-boiler from Delft Willem Noodt, to whom *De zeepzieder* (The Soap-Boiler) was dedicated in 1791.³¹⁶

Ocker Gevaerts, whom we have already met on his provocative drive through the stadholder's gateway in The Hague with Cornelis de Gijselaar in 1786, was an even more famous figure. By 1806, however, a year before his death, his youthful ardour had long since been dampened. In that year he was honoured with the dedication of the book on architecture, *De bouwkonstenaar*. According to a letter from the Dordrecht minister Paulus Bosveld, embittered by what was happening he had shut himself away in his country house Kilzigt during the radical phase of the Batavian Republic, 'and his wife reconciled herself to becoming a farmer's wife, tending a couple of fine black-and-white cows, some pigs, sheep etc.' He re-emerged in 1804 and threw himself back into local Dordrecht politics by accepting a nomination as a city councillor.³¹⁷ Pieter Blussé's dedication must have been related to this—which leads us to another observation. It may have been necessary to be or have been a committed Patriot to qualify for a dedication in one of Blussé's volumes, but this alone was not sufficient. This commitment had at the very least to be accompanied by other characteristics that were of benefit to Pieter Blussé and his series. For instance, Blussé was just as much a friend of the former Patriot regent Cornelis de Gijselaar as he was of Ocker Gevaerts; he had once written an ode to their actions and he maintained a lively correspondence with him. But he did not dedicate any of the twenty-four volumes to De Gijselaar, who could certainly have done with a little good press when he was accused of embezzlement in 1797. Unfortunately for him, he was now completely sidelined from government, and as such no longer of any use to Pieter as a patron. Pieter's namesake and close friend Pieter van Beest—his 'mate Pieter'—did not merit a dedication, although Pieter's 'mate Jan'—Jan Hendrik van Meteren—did make the grade. But then, Pieter van Beest was not engaged in any of the trades or occupations in the series. He was a wine-merchant with one of Pieter Blussé's sons for while and often substituted for another son as editor in chief of the *Dordrechtsche Courant*. But as well

³¹⁵ Loosjes, *Vaderlandsche historie* XVI, 206; Ibid. XXVIII, 237.

³¹⁶ Ibid. XXVIII, 237.

³¹⁷ ARA, PA De Gijselaar (3.20.21), inv. 20, dated 13 March 1796. See Van der Aa, *Biographisch woordenboek*; Herenboekjes 1793.

as their adherence to the Patriot cause and, possibly, their friendship, each and every one of the people to whom Pieter dedicated the volumes of his series had something else to offer. It might be sufficient political power to afford protection, like Henry François de Court and Ocker Gevaerts, or assistance in compiling the volume concerned, like the delftware manufacturer Lambertus Sanderus, or even a relevant manuscript on offer, like Wopco Cnoop. The fact that most of them also had a financial interest in the business covered by 'their' volume may also have been important in terms of the likelihood of their making a contribution towards the costs and could equally be crucial in providing building blocks for the series in the form of trade secrets.

Trade Secrets and Espionage

In his forewords Blussé repeatedly, and with good reason, appealed to anyone who had 'expertise and opportunity' to help 'build up our stock and contribute articles on topics that are not generally available; for which we shall gladly offer all reasonable remuneration'.³¹⁸ In his prospectus he had promised that his series would be more than a mere translation of foreign works. As Holtrop was promising for his 'Fatherlandish encyclopaedia', so Blussé likewise pledged to incorporate specifically Dutch information into his series and to produce manuals based on the production methods used in the Netherlands that were as original as possible. He believed that books geared to domestic practices would best serve Dutch industry and, by extension, his publishing house. Blussé was targeting his series at the widest possible readership, both skilled craftspeople and wealthy book lovers—and for this latter group in particular it was important that his books could contribute something over and above the French *Description des arts et métiers*³¹⁹ and Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, which already had pride of place in their well-filled bookshelves.³²⁰ Unlike French publishers, who profited

³¹⁸ Kasteleijn, *De zijdeverwer*, foreword.

³¹⁹ The travel journal of the Rotterdam city doctor Salomon de Monchy in 1790 gives the impression that the *Description des arts et métiers* was available in the Netherlands but that there were distribution problems. During his time in Paris he describes in glowing terms how he went to the bookshop of M. Moutard, where he bought the missing seven or eight volumes of *Les arts & métiers* for the library of the Batavian Society for Empirical Philosophy, 'so that now the Society has as complete a collection of the work as may be found anywhere' (GAR, FA De Monchy, inv. 51, 40).

³²⁰ This emerges from a letter enclosed with a bill dated 20 June 1771 to the relatives of Mr J. Sappius of Maassluis. Blussé informed them that the deceased had subscribed to several 'part works', including the '*Dictionnaire Encyclopedique*' in quarto format, of which

from the specifically French system of privileges whereby inventions were examined by the authorities and made public so that they could be protected,³²¹ it was no easy matter for Blussé to acquire inside information from Dutch companies and industries.³²²

The liberal attitude of Dutch business in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—when Tsar Peter the Great was welcome to study shipbuilding techniques in the Netherlands³²³ and John Fromanteel of London encountered not the slightest obstacle in learning how to make Christiaan Huygens's pendulum clocks³²⁴—had become very guarded by the eighteenth. The Republic's position in the Golden Age, when it had welcomed the international exchange of ideas, had done it no harm at all. In fact, the glory of the Golden Age was due in no small measure to the knowledge brought with them by all sorts of immigrants—French Huguenots and Flemish Protestants who fled to the Protestant Republic, as well as skilled craft-people attracted by the greater prosperity there. When the economy collapsed in the eighteenth century, in part as a result of mercantilist policy in the surrounding countries—instigated, it should be noted, by Colbert, the man behind *Description des arts et métiers*—things changed.³²⁵ In the Dutch Republic too—for instance in the *Oeconomische Tak*—voices were raised in support of protectionist measures, and a number of tough laws were introduced to prevent highly-trained artisans from emigrating to one of the neighbouring countries. In 1751, for instance, the States-General forbade people to set up businesses abroad and banned them from accepting employment with companies established in other countries. Anyone caught breaking this law would face the death penalty.³²⁶

he [Pieter] had now received the fourth volume (ARA II, FA Van Assendelft de Coningh, inv. 81).

³²¹ See L. Hilaire-Pérez, 'Invention and the State in 18th-century France', *Technology and Culture* 32 (1991) 911–31, esp. 912–15.

³²² Unlike the vast quantities of literature dealing with industrial espionage and the secrecy surrounding production methods and processes in our time, there is very little information available about these practices in the past. The article by Vibeke Kingma is one of the very few: V. Kingma, 'Industrial spying in the Dutch paper industry: The Swedish Case', *International Molinology. Bulletin of the International Molinological Society*, no. 57, December 1998, 1–5. With thanks to H.J. Looijesteyn for bringing this article to my attention.

³²³ See: V. Kingma, 'Industrial spying', 1.

³²⁴ C.M. Cipolla, *Before the Industrial Revolution. European Society and Economy* (2nd edition, London 1981) 187.

³²⁵ Kingma, 'Industrial spying', 1.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

A rigidly protectionist climate like this is obviously not helpful to a series claiming to be a complete description of all trades and occupations. The fact that the series suffered from this is evidenced by the relatively small number of original Dutch volumes it contained. The complaints of the publisher and authors we can read between the lines are perhaps even more revealing. For instance, in his book on brewing Jacobus Buys gives vent to his exasperation about the tendency of 'skilled brewers to keep all their expertise to themselves and to take it, along with their experience, to their graves'.³²⁷ Viewed in this light, his expressed hope that his book 'will encourage more expert brewers to correct my mistakes and publish another and more proficient manner of brewing' is not without irony.³²⁸ In his book about the potter's trade, *De porceleinfabriek*, Kasteleijn does not conceal his anger at a manufacturer who refused to share his knowledge. After discussing and praising at length an Amsterdam factory where original Dutch earthenware was produced, he laid into its counterpart in The Hague in no uncertain terms.³²⁹

For many years now, people in The Hague have praised a china factory, which is, or at least was, run by Mr J.F. VAN LIJNKER: where, unless I am informed to the contrary, only pottery already made elsewhere is decorated. I should be able to speak of this with more certainty had the supposed Director had the courtesy to honour me with a response to my written and, I believe, reasonable request.³³⁰

In gathering information about working methods, Kasteleijn evidently met with such a frustrating lack of cooperation in some branches of industry that his friend Gerrit Brender à Brandis, writing a biography of him after his death, felt compelled to record this. He asserted that Kasteleijn's work would not necessarily have gained greater depth and detail even if he had not been forced by lack of money to explore a thousand and one different topics, for he would still have been refused entry into certain factories and crucial information would still have been withheld from him. 'Was he not on many occasions disappointed in this by the china and paper factories?'³³¹ Unfortunately, there is no record of any problems Kasteleijn may have encountered when researching his book on indigo and blue-dyeing, for which he received a medal from the *Oeconomische Tak*—in part because

³²⁷ Buys, *De bierbrouwer*, 9.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

³²⁹ Kasteleijn, *De porceleinfabriek*, 224.

³³⁰ Kasteleijn, *De porceleinfabriek*, 224.

³³¹ Brender à Brandis, 'Levensschets', 269.

of his informative additions. His handicap may have meant that the investigations of this one-eyed author met with greater success in the dye and paint industry—a sector which, as the hack Nicolaas Hoefnagel contemptuously observed, preferred to employ blind children so as to keep its recipes secret.³³²

We might well wonder whether Dutch manufacturers' tendency to guard their trade secrets with their lives actually made sense. It takes much more than reading printed instructions to successfully implement someone else's techniques and innovations. The late introduction into England of a watermill for silk manufacture is a good illustration of this. The mechanism had already been described in detail in 1607 and illustrated in engravings in Vittorio Zonca's *Nuovo teatro di machine et edifice* (A New Theatre of Machines and Buildings), a book that went into two editions even though the mill was still regarded as a state secret. Despite this, more than a century passed before the English succeeded in constructing a copy of the mill, and when they did it was not based on information in the book but with the assistance of John Lombe, who had spent two years spying in Italy. The economic historian Carlo Cipolla cites in this regard the educationist M. Oakeshott, who questioned the influence of printing on the spread of technology:

It might be supposed that an ignorant man, some edible materials and a cookery book compose together the necessities of a self-moved activity called cooking. But nothing is further from the truth. The cookery book is not an independently generated beginning from which cooking can spring; it is nothing more than an abstract of somebody's knowledge of how to cook: it is the stepchild, not the parent of the activity, but if it were his sole guide he could never, in fact, begin: the book speaks only to those who know already the kind of thing to expect from it and consequently how to interpret it.³³³

That technology spread as a rule not through books but as a result of the migration of human capital was something the Swedish government had also realized in the eighteenth century. Around 1758, in an attempt to improve their paper industry, the Swedes set about poaching employees of the Honig paper company in Zaandam. Although they had succeeded in producing the blue and grey paper they had formerly imported from the

³³² *De Koopman* 6 (1776) no. 56; *De Koopman* 2 (1769) no. 48. This refers to Otto Plaat's Amsterdam varnish factory. I thank Ton Jongenelen who pointed this out to me.

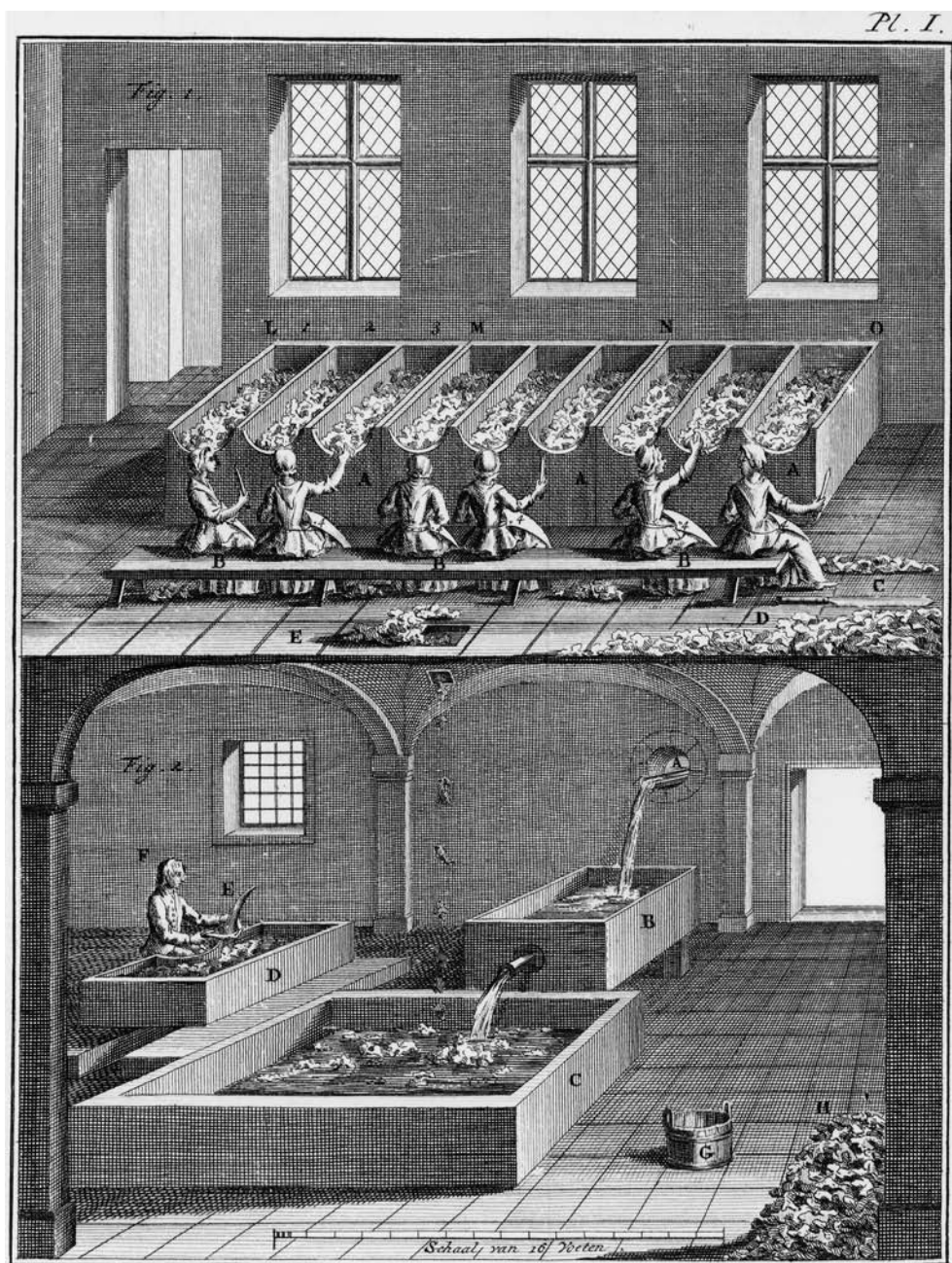
³³³ The above quotations and examples come from Cipolla, *Before the Industrial Revolution*, 185–92.

Republic, which consequently lost an important market for its paper, the quality of the white paper produced in the Republic was still superior. This posed a problem for the Swedish national bank, which had decided that the best way to combat the forging of paper money was to print the bank notes itself. The bank built a factory for the purpose which was ready to operate in 1756 but had to contend with a lack of technical know-how and experience. The Dutch paper-making method was so refined and complex—a sophisticated system for sorting rags, a faster process for breaking the rags down that did not impair the quality, and ingenious methods of shaping and flattening the paper—that the Swedes concluded that sending spies (even if they managed to get into the factory) would not be sufficient. Eventually, with promises of excellent working conditions and substantial financial rewards, Swedish spies managed to lure two of Honig's employees, Jan and Erasmus Mulder, to Sweden. On the journey, however, Jan was caught in Amsterdam and sentenced to sixteen years imprisonment, but died in gaol after just forty-eight days. His brother Erasmus managed to reach Sweden and later sent for another brother, Casper, and other members of the family to join him. For the rest of his life, as he betrayed Honig's secrets in dribs and drabs, he enjoyed a salary of 1,000 guilders a year and free accommodation, including fuel, food and drink.³³⁴

Against such a background it is understandable that the volume on paper making in Blussé's series is no more than a translation of the relevant volume, compiled by La Lande, of *Description des arts et métiers*. Although Kasteleijn made it appear to be a deliberate decision on his part (he did not, he said, wish to disadvantage the Dutch paper manufacturers by revealing their secrets), this argument may be dismissed—as we shall see—as a convenient excuse by an author who had simply failed to penetrate these closely-guarded secrets. Following copious quotations from foreign writers praising the superior quality of Dutch paper, 'their paper has an admirable velvety texture'—and an account of the way foreign governments made vain promises to reward anyone who will 'manufacture paper for them that vies in quality with that of the Netherlands', Kasteleijn concluded with this piece of thinly-veiled campaigning:

The Hollanders ... are secretive in the extreme concerning the least advantages of their factories. Several German provinces have made every possible effort to elicit the secrets of the Dutch art of paper-making, but because of the extraordinary caution of the Dutch paper manufacturers they have never

³³⁴ This case is described in more detail in Kingma, 'Industrial spying', 1-5.



28. Depiction of the sorting, cutting and soaking of rags for the manufacture of paper in P.J. Kasteleijn's *De papiermaaker* (Dordrecht 1792). National Library, The Hague.

succeeded. And it is precisely this that imposes upon me the far from exaggerated patriotic duty not to make the slightest mention of the secret arts of our paper manufacturers, and to say nothing even of the mills and the machinery other than that which foreign authors, such as La Lande himself, have already described or professed to know in their books.³³⁵

To pre-empt the criticism that by withholding information he would not advance the cause of the paper-making industry—which was, after all, one of the aims of Blussé's series—Kasteleijn observed that his approach meant 'our fellow citizens could lose nothing since we could have taught our manufacturers nothing in a more or less complete account and they are much more likely to have been disadvantaged by it'.³³⁶ Kasteleijn's book, he asserted, would primarily prove useful to them by enabling them to find out exactly what foreigners knew about Dutch manufacturing methods.

Where paper manufacture was concerned—one of the few branches of industry in which the Republic still had a lead—there was certainly a case to be made for breaking the promise to put as much specifically Dutch information as possible into the series. It would seem, though, that in this case it was more a matter of circumstances beyond his control than a deliberate decision. Kasteleijn would not have wanted to take the risk of spending the rest of his life in prison in Amsterdam like the unfortunate Jan Mulder. Nor would the firm of Blauw and Briel in Zaandam, to whom the book was dedicated, have been exactly delighted with a revealing account of what went on behind the scenes in the Dutch paper industry. It would seem, though, that Kasteleijn nevertheless did attempt—although in vain—to peep through the keyhole. In the passage from Kasteleijn's biography by his friend Gerrit Brender à Brandis quoted above we come across the remark that in his attempts to gather as much information as possible, he was frustrated in particular by 'the porcelain and paper factories'.³³⁷

Wardenaar's Description of Printing. An Omission

Frans Janssen's hypothesis that David Wardenaar's *Beschrijving der boekdrukkunst* (Description of the Printers' Craft) was not included in the Blussé series because of a 'tendency to keep trade information secret',³³⁸

³³⁵ P.J. Kasteleijn, *De papiermaaker* (Dordrecht 1792) 259–60.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 260.

³³⁷ Brender à Brandis, 'Levensschets', 269.

³³⁸ F.A. Janssen, *Zetten en drukken in de achttiende eeuw. David Wardenaar's beschrijving der boekdrukkunst (1801)* (2nd edition; Haarlem 1986) 102. Wardenaar's handbook was first published in 1982 in the first edition of Frans Janssen's PhD thesis.

an indirect reference to Kasteleijn's circumspect approach in *De papiermaker*,³³⁹ does not seem very likely. An analysis of the series, which even found room for a work on candle-making written in prison by a tanner and Martinet's rambles around charcoal kilns, would likewise seem to rule out some of Janssen's other explanations—lack of clarity, omissions, inaccuracies, imperfections in Wardenaar's writings, careless use of language and poor style. Pieter Blussé, who said that he had often had a hand in editing the books in his series, was quite capable of polishing a few rough edges, and he would probably not even have noticed Wardenaar's 'tendency towards verbosity', a sin that Pieter himself had often committed during his engagement and in his political speeches. Janssen's chief explanations, as he says himself, would seem more likely. Wardenaar's book was a hybrid. The mixture of technical information and social arguments, and above all the sarcastic remarks about printers' patrons and publishers, may well have scared off potential publishers. On top of this, the book was arranged alphabetically, not systematically like the other volumes in the Blussé series. Admittedly, Blussé's *Complete Description* was not the most balanced collection in terms of quality, but at least each volume in the series had the same structure and all the authors, as we have seen, approached the trade in question from the employer's point of view and not, as Wardenaar did, through the often mutinous eyes of the workers. Since Blussé was both a publisher and the owner of a printing-house when Wardenaar was working on his manuscript, he would not have appreciated either his view of publishers as wealthy, rapacious aristocrats, 'despoilers' of the profession, or his call for higher wages for printers.³⁴⁰

Because Janssen did not investigate how Blussé's *Complete Description* came into being, he overlooked another possible explanation for Blussé's omission of Wardenaar's book from the series, despite the constant shortage of copy with which he had to contend. As we have noted, the contributing authors and the people to whom volumes of the series were dedicated were all Patriot supporters. In the politically tumultuous 1790s, when he was trying to get his manuscript published, however, Wardenaar was a fervent Orangist.³⁴¹ Against the backdrop of the highly politicized society at the time, with a schism between Patriots and Orangists, Warde-

³³⁹ Janssen, *Zetten en drukken*, 41.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 61-62.

naar's political convictions would have been seen as a serious obstacle.³⁴² This might still have proved surmountable, had he refrained from seeking publicity for his views. In 1793, however, this foreman of the Orangist printer Reinier Arrenberg made it plain that he was a fervent royalist in his *Eerekrans* (laurel wreath) for the governor of the Dutch city of Maastricht, the only work he succeeded in publishing. This panegyric praises Frederick of Hessel-Cassel for defending Maastricht against the French.³⁴³ It is possible that around 1800 Wardenaar changed his allegiance, as Janssen infers from the way certain ideas were phrased in his printers' manual. But as long as Wardenaar was still widely regarded as an Orangist this would not have made any difference to Blussé. In a series intended to establish the soundness and reliability of his printing-house and as a political manifesto, an author from the 'opposition' was, to put it mildly, difficult to accommodate.

Reviews

Despite, or perhaps precisely because of all the setbacks with his series, Blussé managed to enhance the reputation of his publishing house, as we learn from the favourable reviews that appeared in the Dutch literary periodical *Algemene Vaderlandsche Letteroefeningen*. In 1789, a year after the first two volumes came out, the journal published the first of a series of enthusiastic reviews commending the books for their 'informative, pleasing and useful' contents.³⁴⁴ The first two volumes gave 'every reason ... to be highly satisfied',³⁴⁵ an impression reinforced when the third volume was reviewed in the year of its publication:

Readers have already been able to gather to some extent the usefulness of this work from what we wrote on the appearance of the first and second parts concerning the plan and the execution of these descriptions, and this third volume serves largely to strengthen that favourable impression; this enterprise is of such value that it should be encouraged by all supporters of the crafts, trades etc. that are of such benefit to society.³⁴⁶

Parts four and five lingered a little longer on the reviewer's desk, two years in fact, but this apparently was only to the good:

³⁴² On the subject of politicized standpoints in the Patriot period, see Van Sas, 'Opinies en politieke cultuur', 104.

³⁴³ Janssen, *Zetten en drukken*, 61.

³⁴⁴ AVLO 1789, 294.

³⁴⁵ AVLO 1789, 294.

³⁴⁶ AVLO 1789, 448-49.

A spirit of scrupulous observation characterized the execution of the first three volumes of this enterprise to such an extent that everyone who is actually concerned with or in any way interested in these skills, trades etc. that are so useful to the country will have rejoiced with unanimous approval at this manner of presentation. Since both the fourth and fifth volumes are in no way less admirable in this respect, one is persuaded to look with a favourable eye on the continuation of this work, and to encourage those of an enquiring mind to make thorough use of it.³⁴⁷

This tone, which equated buying volumes of the series with contributing to the domestic economy, was maintained through all the reviews.³⁴⁸ The next one included word for word Blussé's appeal for 'generous cooperation from experts who are able to support their efforts in a profitable manner'.³⁴⁹ The reviewer of Kasteleijn's book on potteries concluded his piece by quoting Blussé's criticism of the uncommunicative porcelain manufacturer J.F. van Lynker, actually going so far as to mention him by name.³⁵⁰ The patriotic nature of the series seems to have brought Blussé well-disposed reviewers and, on occasion, free publicity. The children's newspaper *Weekblad voor neerlands jongelingschap*, for instance, which contained no advertisements, made an exception for Blussé's series; it was recommended to young readers as 'a most excellent work, of great value to all the young people of the Netherlands'.³⁵¹ We have already seen that Blussé's presentation of the series to the members of the National Assembly in 1797 was mentioned in the printed edition of the Proceedings of the National Assembly.

Blussé's judgement of the importance of original Dutch contributions and additions proves to have been very shrewd; in the reviews of the *Vaderlandsche Letteroeffeningen* it is notably the specifically Dutch information

³⁴⁷ AVLO 1791, 116-17.

³⁴⁸ In the literary periodical *Algemeene Vaderlandsche letteroeffeningen* there were reviews of the first sixteen volumes, from 1788 to 1799 (AVLO 1789: 293-95, 448-53; 1791: 116-20, 430-33; 1793: 109-13, 534-36; 1799: 477-78, 622). After that, not only did the series come to a halt, part 17 appearing three years later, but the periodical also stopped writing articles on Blussé's series. Possibly interest had dwindled due to the delay in publishing or it was the result of a change of editor. The increasing specialization of magazines and journals may also have been a contributory factor. See Johannes, *De barometer van de smaak*, which argues that specialization in periodicals did not really take hold until the mid-nineteenth century (p. 192), and see Muis-van der Leun, *De uitgave van de Vaderlandsche letteroeffeningen*, esp. 50-51.

³⁴⁹ AVLO 1791, 431.

³⁵⁰ AVLO 1789, 453.

³⁵¹ *Weekblad voor Neêrlands jongelingschap* (The Hague, C. Plaat) volume IV, 1786. A. Blussé & Son are the only booksellers whose name also appears on the list of subscribers (volume I, 1783).

that is cited and discussed. Indeed, the only criticism of the contents concerns Kasteleijn's caginess about the Zaandam paper-making industry.³⁵² Although the reviewer claims to have every sympathy with Kasteleijn in that the latter felt constrained by his 'Fatherland-loving sense of duty' not to betray any of the country's trade secrets, he does comment that the author might at least have informed the readers about certain 'so-called secrets in the Hollandish paper mills ... which, in fact, can no longer be described as secrets' because they had already been described in detail in foreign works:

The engineer Leonardt Christoph Sturm, having studied the paper mills in Zaandam, speaks among other things about secrets that the paper-makers will not even share with one another; meanwhile he, although a foreigner, publishes in his *Vollständige Muhlen Baukunst*, Augsburg, 1718, in fol. Tab. XXV-XXVII, and especially in Tab. XXVI Figs. 1 and 2, the closely-guarded information about the machinery used in our paper mills to grind rags for paper. Perhaps Mr Kasteleijn could have still cited something useful about the paper mills from this work, had he known it, without in any way exceeding his brief.³⁵³

Apart from that, the critic has nothing but praise and quotes with thinly-disguised delight Kasteleijn's description of the Göttingen professor Justus Klaproth's discovery of how to 'make new paper from already-printed paper' and 'completely wash out the original printed letters'. Unlike Betje Wolff whom we saw at the beginning of this chapter contemplating book-burnings, this reviewer puts the case for recycling: not just German literature, but Dutch too 'would provide us with a sufficient supply; and our authors would then be of more use to the general welfare through the destruction of their works than through simple oblivion'.³⁵⁴

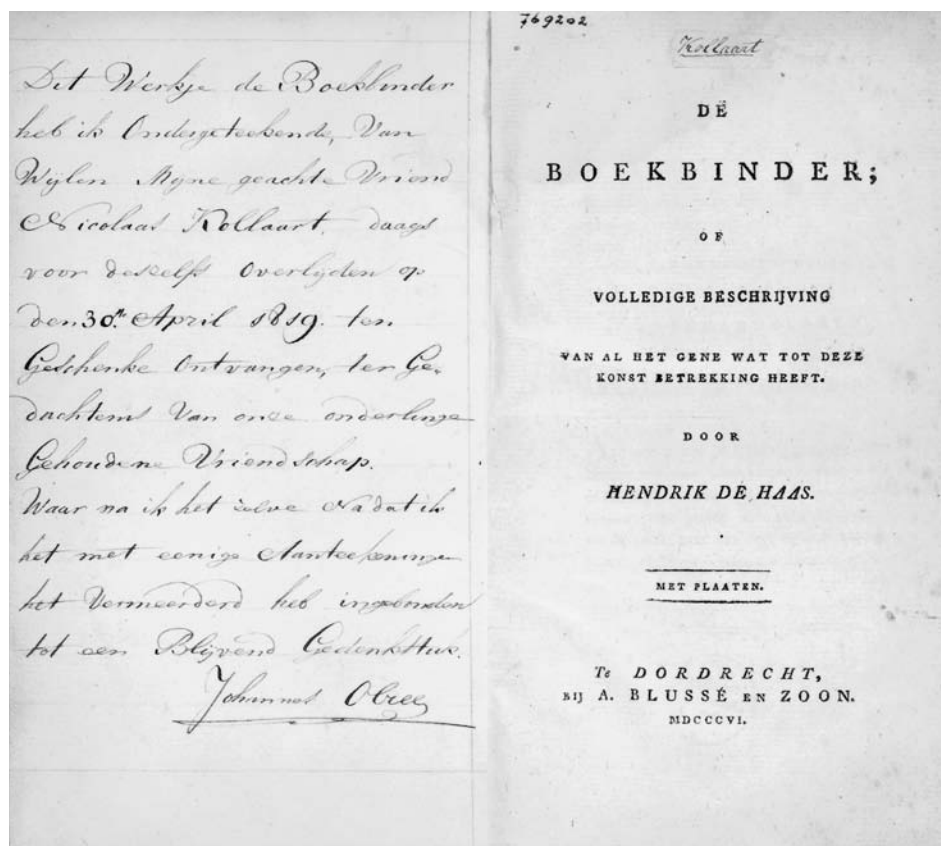
An Enduring Series

Oblivion was definitely not part of Blussé's plan for his series. In an increasingly transitory market—the growing demand for up-to-date information meant that books became outdated more quickly than before—Blussé was aiming for longevity. He evidently succeeded: some of his handbooks are still consulted today. We have already seen that the individual volumes in the series were printed in much larger editions than one would expect,

³⁵² AVLO 1793, 109-13.

³⁵³ AVLO 1793, 113.

³⁵⁴ AVLO 1793, 113. See also the first section of this chapter for more variants of paper destruction.



29. Title page of Hendrik de Haas's *De boekbinder*, with notes written by Johannes Obree, who had inherited the book in 1819 from Nicolaas Kollaart and had it rebound as a 'lasting memento' ('Blijvend Gedenkstuk') to this good friend. National Library, The Hague.

given the number of subscribers. Half a century after publication, not only were they still available but apparently the information they contained was still relevant enough for them not to be remaindered. Several volumes in the series have recently been republished in facsimile.

Durability was not, though, the only key to the success of the enterprise. Holtrop, too, must have cherished the hope that his 'Fatherlandish Encyclopaedia' would be more than a nine day's wonder. The crucial difference between the two projects was their feasibility. The production costs for Blussé's 24-part series were considerably lower than those of Holtrop's 40-volume reference work, to which a large number of Dutch authors and engravers would contribute—quite apart from the cost of the separate

volumes of engravings. When he issued his prospectus, Blussé's promises were more modest—contributions from Dutch authors, but no names mentioned; numerous plates, but no specific numbers given—so he had less to live up to. He could make the most of the talents of a small number of authors and take advantage of his engravers' ability to copy, or even trace, the French engravings. His project was also less susceptible to delay. In Holtrop's concept volumes cross-referenced others; in the *Complete Description* each book stood alone. This meant they could be sold individually and did not suffer when there were delays in producing the following volume. In fact, delays meant that the costs could be spread over time and that the series, should it not make a profit or at least cover its costs, at least earned its keep as a calling card for the firm. Each time a new volume in the series was published—with or without grumbles in the foreword about the great efforts the publisher had made to bring the work to a satisfactory conclusion—the reading public was reminded yet again of the perseverance, the idealism and the dependability of the firm that did not want to disappoint its subscribers and was determined to contribute to the economic revival of the Dutch Republic.

'A Consequential Ill that Freedom Draws.' The Conflict between an Editor and His Publishers

Jacob Voegen van Engelen versus Blussé and Holtrop

Readers of the *Leidsche Courant* who opened their newspapers on 4 January 1779 and took the trouble to read the advertisements as well as the news might have noticed the following announcement, sandwiched between the latest book titles, recommendations for Swiss herbal teas, potions to settle the stomach and notices concerning strange disappearances. It had been placed by a Leiden city physician and editor of periodicals, Jacob Voegen van Engelen.

The authors of the *Genees-, natuur-, en huishoudkundige Jaarboeken* (Year-books of Medicine, Physics and Household Management) having observed with considerable displeasure that in volume six, published last month by the printers A. Blussé & Son of Dordrecht, and Van Esveldt and Holtrop of Amsterdam, substantial alterations had been made without their knowledge, have therefore decided to terminate their connection with the aforesaid printers ... but since they have observed that this work was favourably received by the public, the same authors will begin immediately on a comparable work with the title *Genees, natuur, en huishoudkundig kabinet* (Compendium

of Medicine, Physics and Household Management), to be published in Leiden by the booksellers Joh. van Tisselen and B. Onnekink.³⁵⁵

In this announcement, Van Engelen informed the public that he was giving up his editorship of the *Geneeskundige Jaarboeken* published by Holtrop and Blussé in order to continue the periodical with a different publisher. It was the first in a series of advertisements which, since neither Van Engelen nor his erstwhile publishers Holtrop and Blussé hesitated to use every means they could think of to discredit one another publicly, reads like a malevolent serial from which we can learn a great deal about the position and status of eighteenth-century literary drudges, or 'hacks'.

This emotionally charged term did not appear in the earliest advertisements, when the absconding editor and his former publishers were still venting their anger about the course of events in what sounds to the uninitiated like fairly innocuous language. But, as so often in quarrels, one jibe led to another. When Van Engelen pointed out in passing that his new periodical would be purged of 'some obvious errors that had crept in',³⁵⁶ his former publishers took this as an invitation to announce that they would continue their journal under the editorship of 'experts'.³⁵⁷ Van Engelen responded with an announcement to the effect that he expected little competition for his new periodical from the sort of 'hacks' with whom Holtrop and Blussé would replace him.³⁵⁸ He would have done better not to say this. Once the word 'hack' had been used, the floodgates burst. In the next announcement from Holtrop and Blussé, they promised that they would do everything in their power to thwart Van Engelen's efforts to start a new periodical. In the foreword to the next number of their periodical, they assured their readers 'and thus also Jacob Voegen van Engelen' that they would explain at length the weighty reasons they had for dismissing Van Engelen as editor—after which the public would be able to judge for themselves to what extent this man 'as a salaried writer employed by the above-mentioned booksellers' was entitled to make off with the concept of their periodical. The foretaste of their exposé is certainly promising:

The above-mentioned are quite prepared to believe that Van Engelen does not fear any hack writer, for he himself pursues that occupation and was once employed in it by the aforementioned; in which capacity, consistent

³⁵⁵ LC 4 January 1779.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ LC 6 January 1779.

³⁵⁸ LC 8 January 1779.

with the character of an overt liar, they will now allow him to rage, lie and twist himself into contortions without being in the least disturbed by such behaviour, or regarding themselves as being derided by it; being convinced that the quasi accusations are as false as the opportunity is favourable to shame openly someone who utters such untruths, and who apparently seems to wish to further his own cause, bring about the disgrace of the book dealers and receive the goodwill of the public. The *Jaarboeken* in the meantime will continue to be published most diligently to the satisfaction of their owners, written by more qualified and far more magnanimous gentlemen, who do not write for a living.³⁵⁹

This powerful closing passage sums up the whole dispute. Van Engelen claimed, as the former editor, that the concept of the *Jaarboeken* was his intellectual property. He felt that, after the conflict with the publishers, he was entitled to continue his work with another publisher. Holtrop and Blussé, on the other hand, thought that they, the publishers, were the 'owners' not just of the physical manifestation of this periodical but of the concept and the subscribers too. As they saw it, having paid Van Engelen for his editing work they had essentially become the owners of his ideas.

This question was not new at the time and is still a live issue today, but the ferocity of the conflict, the methods adopted, the nature of the arguments and the way public opinion was mobilized are characteristic of the late eighteenth century. The growth of the book trade spawned a much larger and, it would seem, increasingly self-confident group of professional translators, compilers and editors. At the same time, the precise domains of publishers and their 'employees' were not clearly defined. The hotch-potch of arguments adduced by Van Engelen and his publishers in the forewords that followed their advertising campaign to demonstrate the justice of their claims reflects the state of confusion in the publishing world.

Van Engelen's Defence

Following Blussé and Holtrop's announcement that in the next issue of the *Jaarboeken* they would give a blow by blow account of the conflict with Van Engelen, the two publishers sent booksellers a circular letter urging them in the strongest terms not to subscribe to Van Engelen's new periodical.³⁶⁰ Those booksellers who did subscribe would be making them-

³⁵⁹ LC 13 January 1779.

³⁶⁰ The text of this prospectus is quoted in the foreword by Jacob Voegen van Engelen in the first volume of his *Genees- natuur- en huishoudkundig kabinet* (Leiden 1779) VI., Unless otherwise stated, the following quotations are taken from this source.

selves accessories to stealing the bread from their colleagues' mouths and—because they would bring discredit to their profession—would ultimately be harming themselves.

We need not remind you how very necessary it is to oppose all such and similar enterprises; you will readily understand how such double-dealing puts each of our fellow dealers in fear of being robbed at any moment as it were of his work, or works, on which great expense and much time and effort have been spent, and furthermore presents him with the grievous prospect of not being able to taste the fruits of his labours. And is this any different from wholly ruining a considerable section of the book trade? Not doubting that, rather than subscribing to the new series of *Jaarboeken*, you will continue to support us in the continuation of our work...

While Holtrop and Blussé were urging their fellow booksellers to consider their long-term interests as a professional group, Van Engelen, in making his defence, did everything he could to avoid being classified as a member of a group of people who had to write for a living. In the introduction to his new periodical he began by emphasizing that this journal was his own idea, and that of 'some of my friends'. These 'friends' remained anonymous and—to dispel the odour of literary drudgery clinging to his name as a result of the publishers' attack on him—were described as a group of devotees of the study of medicine, physics and household management.³⁶¹ In describing them thus, he was referring to the distinction, common since the seventeenth century, between enthusiasts and those who wrote for a living. The work of amateur authors enjoyed a higher status because it was produced free from the pressure of financial interests.³⁶² By defining himself as a devotee, Van Engelen sought to place himself in an unimpeachable position. He underscored this by adding that he and his co-authors had taken up the project of compiling the *Jaarboeken* entirely at their own expense.³⁶³ Towards the end of his argument he returned to this point and provided a remarkably detailed (for the period) list of his remunerations.³⁶⁴ This he did in order to clear his name of the publishers' 'malicious and scurrilous accusations' that he had worked for them on the *Jaarboeken* 'as a wage-earning writer' and in this sense had 'occupied the position of hack writer in their service'. Van Engelen's definition of the term 'hack' is ex-

³⁶¹ Ibid., II.

³⁶² See Baggerman, *Een drukkend gewicht. Leven en werk van de zeventiende-eeuwse veelschrijver Simon de Vries* (Amsterdam 1993) 194.

³⁶³ *Genees- natuur- en huishoudkundig kabinet*, no. 1 (Leiden 1779) II.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., IX. For the first two issues he apparently received only two guilders per sheet, and for the later issues one ducat (five guilders) per sheet.

tremely interesting, if only because the contemporary connotations of this concept are still far from clear. According to Van Engelen:

A hack is someone who, in order to earn his living, accepts the task given to him by a bookseller according to the latter's plan and predetermined will, for a certain stipulated price; whose pen is thus impelled and directed not by his own ingenuity or desire to work, but on the orders of a printer.³⁶⁵

This definition did not apply to him, however, because he belonged, he asserted, to that category of writers who:

without being asked or commissioned beforehand by any bookseller, but out of their own passion for knowledge, design a work themselves, gathering together and paying for the required material, and then propose to a bookseller that he should print such a work, outlined according to their own conception; then hand the work over to be published, without even drawing up a contract with him to their own advantage.³⁶⁶

Nevertheless, he did venture in passing to stand up for authors or translators who did work on the instructions of publishers. 'As long as the writer or translator does not allow his pen to be used for any type of contemptible composition' they should likewise not be accused of being hacks nor be treated as mere wage-earners whom the publisher believes he can bend to his will and oblige to obey his orders:

How could it possibly be reasonable that someone who makes his studies his work, devoting his precious time, his sweat and his labour and giving it to booksellers should do this to enrich them alone! The great men in all areas of scholarship were not ashamed to be hacks in this sense.³⁶⁷

In other words, Van Engelen was making a distinction between hacks, writers working to a commission and amateur authors. The dividing line between a hack and a writer working on commission was a particularly tenuous one, consisting solely in the presence—or absence—of an opportunistic tendency in the author. This approach accords with that of the spectator-author Justus van Effen, who earned his own living by writing but reserved the epithet 'hack' for 'people without morals who could be hired for money'.³⁶⁸ Despite the shining example of Van Engelen's praised

³⁶⁵ Ibid., VIII-IX.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., IX.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ This interpretation of Van Effen's views is taken from L. Kuitert, 'In den beginne was de schrijver. Maar dan? De beroepsauteur in boekhistorisch onderzoek', *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse boekgeschiedenis* 1 (1994) 89-107, 94. Van Effen himself put it in more flowery terms. 'A person who writes to earn his daily bread is someone who does not care what he

but nameless ‘great men’—he claimed he was not giving their names in order to avoid anything that might ‘hint at personality’³⁶⁹—he felt it would be safer not to align himself with this difficult-to-define group of writers who worked on commission.

Yet even in this sense Blussé and Holtrop cannot pin upon me the name of hack, for they did not commission me to write the *Jaarboeken*. On the contrary, I offered them to them already implemented according to my design, ready for publication.³⁷⁰

And Van Engelen went even further, claiming that he had even had to contribute his own money to the publication of the *Jaarboeken*:

For the first two sections, namely, which were printed for consideration, I received the sum of two guilders for each page; a remuneration which, far from recompensing myself and my friends for our efforts, or even providing dry bread ... was not sufficient to cover the expenses which my friends, and I in particular, had incurred; for we were responsible for all the expenditure, save for the printing and distribution.³⁷¹

Van Engelen calculated for his readers how much money and effort he had invested in producing the first two issues. He had had to purchase reference works, newspapers and journals, and to pay for pens and paper and the cost of postage. To strengthen his case, he pointed out that he had never even charged the printers for the illustrations he provided for the journal, which he had drawn himself. Considering he had had such sizeable outlay, ran his argument, raising his fee to a ducat per sheet after the first trial issues could scarcely be described as anything other than ‘reasonable compensation’.

If we compare these rates with the remuneration paid to authors working for publishers such as Kruseman and Bohn in the first half of the nineteenth century—an average of around 22 guilders per sheet—the five guilders that Van Engelen received for his work was certainly no fortune.³⁷² This was not denied by the publishers, who observed in their defence that

writes about or how he writes it; truth and prevarication are all alike to him; all that interests him is how he may earn money by scribbling as many pages as possible. His honour or shame, the edification or vexation of his fellow-man, are matters he does not even bother about: he goes from one bookseller to another in the hope of finding work, like a timid craftsman approaching each boss with hat in hand, in the expectation of being taken on (*Hollandsche Spectator* II (2nd edition; Amsterdam 1756) 521–35, 531.

³⁶⁹ *Genees- natuur- en huishoudkundig kabinet*, no. 1 (Leiden 1779) IX.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

³⁷² Kuitert, ‘In den beginne was de schrijver’, 97.



30. Portrait of Willem Holtrop (1751-1835) by D. Sluyter to a design by H. Langeveld. Photograph Iconographic Bureau, The Hague.

the fee was indeed not 'too much' but that there was clearly a difference between one piece of work and another: 'for the translation of *** one of us also paid him 4 guilders and 15 stivers per sheet'. So Van Engelen was back to square one. By shrewdly pointing out that he had also undertaken translation work for the same publishers at lower rates, they had put him firmly into the very category from which he had tried to distance himself.

In an apologia written somewhat later in response to an attack from Holtrop, Van Engelen abandoned his attempts to avoid being described as someone who wrote for a living and changed his approach.

(And this is the very worst.) I get a good part of my living from translation; it makes up part of my income. Yes, I am very well aware, Mr Holtrop: *Quiconque est pauvre a tort* [it is wrong to be poor]—I have often heard it said and several times experienced that it is wrong not to be rich. Well, then I am in the wrong. ...I congratulate you on being so rich that you have no need to write, collect or translate books, but can make your living by selling them. It must be so pleasant to be rich!³⁷³

³⁷³ Ibid., 'Apologie van den uitgeever', XI. Van Engelen's poverty was no exaggeration. In 1778 he was acting city physician in Leiden and medical advisor for Swiss students; he

The reasoned arguments of an altruistic dilettante author have made way for the strident complaint of a poverty-stricken hack. This metamorphosis was brought about by the poisonous pen of Willem Holtrop.

Willem Holtrop's Insidious Rhetoric

After the publication of Van Engelen's arguments and their own explanations in their advertisements, it was absolutely crucial for Holtrop and Blussé to demonstrate that the periodical was their idea, not Van Engelen's.³⁷⁴ According to the apologia in their foreword, Holtrop had been busy for a considerable time preparing a periodical with the help of 'experts' when 'his particular friend' Pieter Blussé showed him a number of 'articles with topics taken from physics and suchlike' which had been offered to him for publication. To Holtrop's astonishment, among these articles were some writings by 'his then friend, Dr Jacob Voegen van Engelen, (to whom, some time before, he had given some work to be translated)'. Holtrop decided to stifle his suspicion that Van Engelen was playing fast and loose with someone else's ideas or, as he put it, 'ploughing with another man's heifer', and 'courteously' accepted his proposal to collaborate with Blussé and his authors.³⁷⁵ Not only did Holtrop imply that Van Engelen was guilty of plagiarism, he also discredited him as an editor when he asserted that immediately after the publication of the first issue there were complaints from readers about the composition of the journal. 'Experts,' he said, had 'repeatedly' complained that 'their more recent and more important pieces were being withheld, and that the editors should publish things that had

resigned from these posts in view of his impending move to Katwijk. The two jobs would not have paid much. We know of no sources of income in the following years (for his appointment: GAL, Stadsarchief 2, inv. 222 2G, p. 25 dated 1778; *ibid.*, inv. 223 2H, dated August 1779, in which his move to Katwijk is announced). It seems unlikely that he actually moved to Katwijk, because in 1779, 1780 and 1782 three of his children were baptized in the English Church of Leiden. Like his oldest son Cornelis, born in 1778, none of these children reached adulthood. His second child, Anthonia (1779-1785), lived the longest (G.A. Lindeboom, 'Inleiding' in Dr J. Voegen van Engelen, *De Surinaamsche artz [= Uitgaven van de natuurwetenschappelijke studiekering voor Suriname en de Nederlandse Antillen*, no. 109] XIV).

³⁷⁴ This Foreword is titled 'The booksellers' address to the reader' and is included in the Yearbooks, part I, section 1, *Genees- natuur- en huishoudkundige jaarboeken*, 1st volume, 1st section (Amsterdam/Dordrecht 1779).

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.* I. He may have known Van Engelen through the Freemasons to which they both belonged. Holtrop was a member of the lodge *La Charité* in Amsterdam (see chapter 3) and Jacob Voegen van Engelen had been a member since 1779 of the lodges *L'Indissoluble* in The Hague and *La Vertu* in Leiden (*Lijst van loges welke onder het Grootoosten der Nederlanden en loges, welke onder buitenlandse grootmachten op Nederlands gebied werken of gewerkt hebben* (s.l.e.a.)).

not already been imparted in other journals or daily papers.' In a word, that the 'diversity of the same should be more carefully-chosen'.³⁷⁶ Although, he wrote, they should have responded as speedily as possible to such criticisms if they wanted to keep the periodical financially sound, the publishers chose to adopt another strategy. In view of Van Engelen's character, they thought it advisable to handle him with kid gloves.

Indeed, it was soon realized that this gentleman was so taken with his own notions and conceptions (however good or bad these may have been) that we considered it almost impossible to persuade him of anything to the contrary; however, we thought it might be possible that he would become more competent in time.³⁷⁷

In line with this enlightened pedagogical approach, no punishments were meted out; instead the publishers introduced a system of rewards in the form of an increase in salary from two guilders per sheet to five guilders and five stivers. It would seem, however, that this approach merely resulted in yet greater obstinacy and complacency on the part of Van Engelen, who then proceeded to write a haughty letter threatening the publishers with his resignation should they continue to meddle with the contents of the periodical. By way of illustration, the publishers quote the letter in question in full in the foreword; after which, for the benefit of those readers who were not yet convinced of the 'utter iniquity of this behaviour', they provided a detailed commentary.³⁷⁸ The chief cause of irritation, as is understandable for a publisher of good repute, was the probable financial consequences of Van Engelen's obduracy. By ignoring the readers' criticisms, the editor had thwarted all the publishers' efforts to make the periodical a profitable enterprise.³⁷⁹

The readers were then presented with a series of examples of differences of opinion between Van Engelen and his publishers to illustrate his obstinacy. Not surprisingly, Holtrop chose to concentrate on the conflict centring on the illustrations Van Engelen had provided free of charge, with which, according to the latter, he had wanted to demonstrate his goodwill,

Furthermore, we now and then received drawings from Mr van Engelen – granted, at no cost—some of which we used, after we had had them cleared up, some we did not. As far as we can remember, among these drawings (to wit, those we returned) ... there was a sketch of a small cart (an amusing

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Ibid. II.

³⁷⁸ Ibid. III.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

little thing for children, we should say) which same cart might have been widely seen for many years already, on display at fairs and suchlike; but since it seemed of little interest to readers we did not deem it worthy of a place in our Yearbooks, but it might be a not inelegant piece of furniture in a dolls' house or cabinet curiosities.³⁸⁰

Holtrop's next letter was even more furious. He summarily dismissed Van Engelen and 'his assistants' and gave him to understand that the periodical 'is the legal property of myself and Blussé': any attempt to continue the periodical with another publisher would be frustrated. He also warned Van Engelen not to carry out his threats to publicize the affair in advertisements, because such a step would do him much more harm than good.

Van Engelen, for his part, managed to deflect Holtrop's poison arrows by airing at length the publishers' methods. Thus, for instance, the criticisms about the periodical made by certain 'experts', which Van Engelen had supposedly ignored, had in fact never reached his ears nor had he ever heard anything about Holtrop's earlier plans to bring out a periodical such as the *Jaarboeken*: 'Nevertheless, you failed to mention this, out of a mixture of praiseworthy restraint and circumspection.'³⁸¹ Van Engelen countered Holtrop's criticism of his casual attitude as editor and his slowness in delivering copy—'we frequently had to prod him into action ... he would often excuse his tardiness by explaining the thousand interruptions he had ... such as writing theses, attending degree ceremonies, teaching his students'³⁸²—with examples of Holtrop's own carelessness, gleefully quoting from memos he had received from the publisher. Holtrop, who was natu-

³⁸⁰ Ibid. IV-V.

³⁸¹ Ibid. IV.

³⁸² *Genees- natuur- en huishoudkundige jaarboeken*, 1st volume, 1st issue (Amsterdam/Dordrecht 1779) VII.

This allegation by Holtrop was either malicious or he was thinking back to translation work Van Engelen had done for him earlier. When Van Engelen became editor of the *Yearbooks* in 1778 he was no longer employed by the university. He had been dismissed from his positions as student and Reader at the university in 1776, at the request of his father, the writer, translator and Lutheran clergyman, Cornelis van Engelen, and finished his degree in 1777 at the University of Duisburg. In 1778 the only post he held was that of 'deputy city physician' in Leiden. The conflict between father and son was caused by Jacob's marriage to Clara Johanna Jacoba van Meurs, daughter of the deputy bailiff of Leiden. Clara became pregnant in the spring of 1776 and they married on 4 October 1778 (Lindeboom, 'Inleiding', XIII-XIV). On 2 September 1776 Cornelis van Engelen requested the Rector of Leiden University to delete his son's name from the university rolls—which inevitably caused an uproar (P.C. Molhuysen, *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis van de Leidsche Universiteit* (7 vols; The Hague, 1913-1924) VI. In a pamphlet by Le Francq van Berkhey, Cornelis van Engelen is described as a 'brute' on account of what Van Berkhey regarded as his disloyal behaviour (Gemeentearchief Leiden (GAL), Le Francq van Berkhey collection, vol. 10, 27).

rally concerned to maintain the good image of his publishing house, cannot have been particularly happy about the references to a 'not very bright typesetter' in his employ about whom he had complained in a note to Van Engelen apologizing for the late appearance of the periodical. He would have been wiser not to commit such things to paper. Van Engelen quoted the note in its entirety in his foreword.³⁸³ Holtrop's memos about whether or not to include certain articles also gave Van Engelen the opportunity to paint Holtrop as an opportunist: 'In order to remain worthy of ***'s favour I want to publish his articles in our *Jaarboeken*'.³⁸⁴

Of far greater interest, however, is the question of principle posed by Van Engelen: to what extent is a writer or editor within his rights when, after a disagreement with his publisher, he continues his work with another publisher. Van Engelen appealed to both 'natural and civil law', arguing that 'the inventor or first founder of any enterprise' should be entitled to 'own the products of his ingenuity'.³⁸⁵ The publisher may indeed hold the copyright to volumes that had already been printed, but the concept should belong to its creator or designer, in other words, the author or editor of the work in question. To deny this right would lead to the 'blatantly unjust' situation in which an author, after one part of his work had been brought out by a certain publisher, would be bound forever after to this publisher's 'despotic tyranny'. Arguing the case logically, Van Engelen continued, the claim made by Holtrop and Blussé implied an enormous constraint, not only on the writer but on their fellow booksellers, who would be deprived of the right to 'set up another such work as Messrs Holtrop and Blussé had on their presses'. Were every bookseller to argue as these two publishers did, there could never have been a journal like the *Nederlandse bibliotheek* alongside the *Vaderlandsche letteroeffeningen*..

The *Hollandsche Mercurius*, the *Postrijder*, the *Europische stoats-secretaris* [sic] are all periodicals of the same kind. Has the owner of the oldest of these perceived the existence of the others as an infringement of his property rights? Have the printers of the *Boekzaal* adduced such an argument against those of the *Republiek der geleerden*?³⁸⁶

This shrewd manoeuvre on Van Engelen's part in invoking publishers' enlightened self-interest—essentially he was alleging that their freedom to

³⁸³ *Genees- natuur- en huishoudkundig kabinet*, volume 1 (Leiden 1779), 'Apologie' VIII.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.* V.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 'Voorberigt', VII.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.* VIII.

set up periodicals as they saw fit was in jeopardy—led Holtrop to hone the distinction he had previously made between the rights of publishers and those of writers working to order. The fact that publishers of periodicals always ran the risk ‘that a second one similar to, or demonstrably better, or noticeably worse than their own might be published by others’ was simply one of the generally accepted hazards of the business. But what Van Engelen had done came into a completely different category: it was breach of contract. After all, any publisher, Holtrop emphasized,

would agree with us that such conduct is both unacceptable and underhand: if one or more of their writers were to take it into their heads—once they had ceased working for that publisher—to publicly announce that he or they were now about to continue elsewhere producing the same work on which he or they had formerly been engaged and for which labours they had received payment, with such printers and in such a manner as they saw fit.³⁸⁷

In other words, publishers had a common interest in punishing actions like Van Engelen’s without mercy. After all, this could well create a dangerous precedent for the book trade. As for why it was so much more threatening when an editor walked off with a concept than when other publishers planned a rival journal, Holtrop, given his position, could only remain vague. The obvious argument, that editors are in a position to take both co-authors and subscribers with them to another publisher, leaving the original publisher with nothing but an empty husk—the title of the periodical and a few back numbers—is something Holtrop can only insinuate. He could not enlarge on this argument in a dispute in which he had systematically portrayed Van Engelen as an editor of little ability or skill, not an author but a ‘collector’ about whom readers and scholars alike complained—as someone, in short, whom he would be perfectly happy to see the back of.

Van Engelen’s Abilities

It is evident, if only from the list of subscribers in the first issue of *Genees-, natuur-, en huishoudkundig kabinet*—188 names who had subscribed for 324 copies—that there was more to Van Engelen than that.³⁸⁸ The list

³⁸⁷ *Jaarboeken* (Amsterdam/Dordrecht 1779) 1e deel, XV.

³⁸⁸ From the age of 13 Jacob Voegen van Engelen attended the Latin School. In 1771 he enrolled in the humanities faculty at Leiden University. He later transferred to the medical faculty. He actually completed his medical training in Duisburg (see note 384).

included not only the names of some authors who had previously worked on the *Jaarboeken*, scholars of standing like Petrus Camper and J.H. van Swinden, and a great many doctors, apothecaries and surgeons, as well as seventy-six booksellers who had apparently paid little heed to the threats uttered in Holtrop and Blussé's advertisements. Among them were a great many colleagues with whom Blussé still worked or had previously had close ties, such as the firm of C. Plaat with whom he was associated in the Tirion company, L. Herdingh who distributed his books in Leiden, the Leiden bookseller Cornelis Heyligert and his Rotterdam colleague D. Vis, with whom his father Abraham Blussé had been on friendly terms, J. de Leeuw, with whom Pieter Blussé was to work in the future, and F. Wanner for whom he had sold illegal books under the counter.³⁸⁹ The booksellers who had offered their customers the opportunity to subscribe to the *Jaarboeken*'s rival were highly respected in the trade: Reinier Arrenberg in Rotterdam, G.M. Cahais in Leeuwarden, A. and J. Honkoop, Luzac and Van Damme in Leiden, Houttuyn in Amsterdam, Van Paddenburg, the widow J. van Schoonhoven and B. Wildt in Utrecht and Martinus Tijl in Zwolle.

If Blussé and Holtrop had cherished the illusion that their advertising campaign would put paid to Van Engelen's initiative, a glance at the list of subscribers would soon have shattered it. The critics of the literary journal *Vaderlandsche letteroeffeningen* also expressed their confidence in the new periodical. Not another word appeared about the *Jaarboeken*, whereas each new issue of the *Kabinet* was greeted with general approval. The bibliographer C.C. Delprat, who in the 1920s compiled an exhaustive list of all the writings on medical topics published in Dutch newspapers between 1680 and 1857 and whose 'sympathy lay more with Dr Voegen van Engelen ... whose responses to the letters from his publishers were more dispassionate and telling than the rejoinders of the other side' was much more taken with Van Engelen as an editor than the man who succeeded him at the *Jaarboeken*, probably Pieter Boddaert.³⁹⁰ After Van Engelen's departure the

³⁸⁹ This refers to Wanner's publication in 1784 of the translation of Joseph Priestley's book on the corruption of Christianity, *Historie der verbasteringen van het Christendom*. The Dordrecht ministers Brouwer and Van Rhyn managed to persuade the public prosecutor to carry out a raid on Wanner and seize all the copies, and to spy on the other bookshops. Blussé and Van Braam were caught trying to sell the banned book. They were given heavy fines for this, as were the printer and the publisher (J.P. Hering in *Op de bres. 200 jaar Haagsch Genootschap tot verdediging van de christelijke godsdienst (1785-1985)* 3-18. esp. 8-9).

³⁹⁰ C.C. Delprat, 'De geschiedenis der Nederlandsche geneeskundige tijdschriften van 1680 tot 1857' in *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis der geneeskunde* VII (rep. 1927) 1-101 deals with the history up to 1801. On the *Jaarboeken* and the *Kabinet*: 72-87, for the quotation: 75.

number of medical contributions in the *Jaarboeken* fell sharply in favour of articles on physics and household management and, according to Delprat, there was little system in the organization of the various sections.³⁹¹ In contrast, the *Kabinet* made good its claim to devote considerable space to medical matters and, says Delprat, 'was compiled with great care, having many annotations added by the publishers to the (mostly translated) articles'.³⁹² If we compare the backgrounds of the authors of the two publications, we find that Holtrop's accusations that Van Engelen took the easy way out by using a large number of translations are equally unjustified. Van Engelen's periodical contains far more articles by Dutch writers, based on experiments carried out in the Netherlands, than does that of Blussé and Holtrop.³⁹³ A number of these authors had previously published in the *Jaarboeken* under Van Engelen.³⁹⁴ He had, in other words, taken some of his writers with him. The anger expressed by Holtrop and Blussé in their forewords was understandable and perhaps even, to some extent, justified. Did Van Engelen behave correctly? Or perhaps we should ask what the legal position was.

Authors' Rights in the Netherlands in the Eighteenth Century

Technically, neither party had any rights. Holtrop's claim to ownership of the journal, long before there were laws governing such matters, was to say the least premature. Until 1796 only publishers who had applied for a provincial privilege or patent for their publication could in some sense describe themselves as owners.³⁹⁵ If any checks were ever actually carried

Delprat does not name the new editor of the *Jaarboeken*. The name of Pieter Boddaert suddenly appears with great regularity in the periodical, after Van Engelen's departure, under features and articles previously signed by Van Engelen, which leads me to suppose that Pieter Boddaert took over Van Engelen's job.

³⁹¹ Delprat, 'De geschiedenis der Nederlandsche geneeskundige tijdschriften', 80-81.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 84.

³⁹³ I studied all the tables of contents of both periodicals in order to make a comparison.

³⁹⁴ Including Petrus Camper, J.H. van Swinden (both authors of an article in *Genees-natuur- en huishoudkundige jaarboeken* 1st volume, 1st issue, and in *Genees- natuur- en huishoudkundig kabinet* volume 1) and J.D. Pasteur who wrote articles published in both periodicals. The latter is referred to by Holtrop in his 1779 foreword as 'a certain P.', according to Holtrop the only other former contributor to the *Jaarboeken* who had defected with Van Engelen to the new periodical. See also Van Engelen's comment in 1782 when he mentions Pasteur, his 'former colleague' as one of his successors (*Kabinet*, volume 3, 1782, p. 3).

³⁹⁵ See for example P.G. Hoftijzer, 'Nederlandse boekverkopersprivileges in de achttiende eeuw', *Documentatieblad werkgroep achttiende eeuw* 22 (1990) 159-80; I.H. van Eeghen, *De Amsterdamse boekhandel 1680-1725* (5 vols. in 6 books; Amsterdam 1961-1978) V2, 28-34.

out, however, the power of the law only extended to the boundaries of the province concerned. Since the system was ineffective, most eighteenth-century printed matter was published without such a privilege. Holtrop and Blussé were no exception here, with their *Jaarboeken*. Not only had they not applied for a privilege to publish the periodical, they had not even drawn up a contract between the editor and themselves. Furthermore, Van Engelen had been careful to give his periodical a slightly different name—the plural noun *Jaarboeken* in the title *Genees-, natuur-, en huiskundige jaarboeken* was replaced by the singular *Kabinet*. To this day the editor of a journal can move to another publisher and start a new and similar periodical with impunity, provided he gives it an even slightly different name.³⁹⁶ When the market is small, however, this will cause problems for both parties, as was the case with Van Engelen and the Holtrop-Blussé partnership. In the end, both periodicals ceased to exist.

Also far ahead of its time was Van Engelen's claim to own the products of his own ingenuity. The earliest copyright law in the Republic dates from 1803,³⁹⁷ more than twenty-five years after the conflict between Van Engelen and his publishers, and it was not until 1881 that a law was introduced which had as its main concern not the protection of publishers against reprinting, but the protection of authors and translators against the exploitation of their 'intellectual property'.³⁹⁸ The 1803 law recognized a 'right of ownership' of written matter that was the original work of the author, but in fact only provided protection for the publisher. Indeed, the term 'author' did not occur once in the entire act. The expression used was 'composers of books'. Anyone was entitled to copyright who 'published an original work

³⁹⁶ One of the earliest legal proceedings to deal with such a question in the Netherlands, the celebrated 'Iris' case, dates from 1839. In this the roles were reversed: the former publisher, Vervloet, was summonsed by the editor Févier. The latter had been paid for his editorial work with shares in the journal—after 1837 he had full ownership of it. He felt betrayed when the publisher then launched a rival periodical under the same name, *Iris*, with a similar layout. Vervloet had even gone so far as to continue with the page numbering of Févier's journal. The latter's lawyer argued that 'generally speaking, in the spirit of all previous and more recent legal principles the title of a book is an inviolable property' and he carried his point. Unlike Holtrop, Blussé and Van Engelen, Févier and Vervloet had signed contracts, which made it possible to convict Vervloet (*Weekblad van het regt*, 9 March 1839; 14 March 1839; 18 March 1839; 1 April 1839).

³⁹⁷ T.H. Wink, *Van privilege tot wet. De ontwikkeling van het recht van kopij en eigendom in den boekhandel in de jaren 1795-1803* (Assen 1942).

³⁹⁸ C. Schriks, 'Nadruk, geoorloofd of diefstal? Frederik Muller en het letterkundig eigendomsrecht' in M. Keyser, J.F. Heijbroek and I. Verheul eds., *Frederik Muller (1817-1881). Leven en werken* (Zutphen 1996) 127-43. Ibid., *Het kopijrecht 16de tot 19de eeuw* (Zutphen 2004) 261-304.

within the Batavian Republic, for which he either owns the generally so-called Right of Copy, because he himself is the composer of it, or has acquired it either for nothing or for payment or in another manner, provided it is lawful'.

The people who promoted this law were not the authors. It was the publishers who, when the old system of privileges was abolished in the Province of Holland in 1796 on the grounds that it was in conflict with the fundamental principles of the Revolution, submitted a petition urging a different form of protection for their publications.³⁹⁹ A committee, of which Willem Holtrop was a prominent member, was set up to investigate the possibilities of new legislation. A surviving file reveals that Holtrop left a considerable mark on both the provincial law of 1796 and the national law of 1803.⁴⁰⁰ It is clear from his draft bill of 1803, which he drew up in his capacity as president of the Association for the Promotion of the Book Trade, that if it had been up to him even the term 'composer', which referred only indirectly to the author, would not have been included in the legislation. His proposal only mentions rights of ownership applying to those who 'have, or have caused to be, printed a book or written matter at their own expense' or who had bought the copyright.⁴⁰¹ When the term 'author' slipped more or less by accident into the act of 1817, the Association lost no time in responding.

The term 'authors' means not only those who *composed* a piece of writing, but also those who *had it composed*. It is far more customary in our own country than it is in France that it is not a writer who designs a piece of writing for publication, but a bookseller, who then commissions a writer to undertake the work and pays him for his services.⁴⁰²

The letter does not expand on the reasons why Dutch publishers, more than their foreign counterparts, should set up and initiate publications themselves. Were they more inventive, or was it that the other party—Dutch authors—had less imagination than the inhabitants of neighbouring countries? If we accept the arguments of this booksellers' pressure group, the much more likely reason for the difference is the relatively large

³⁹⁹ Wink, *Van privilegie tot wet*; H.L. de Beaufort, *Het auteursrecht in het Nederlandsche en internationale recht* (Utrecht 1909); J.T. Bodel Nyenhuis, *De wetgeving op drukpers en boekhandel in de Nederlanden tot in het begin der XIXe eeuw* (Amsterdam 1892) [= *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van den Nederlandschen boekhandel* 4]; Schriks, *Het kopijrecht*, 267–72.

⁴⁰⁰ Nationaal Archief (NA) III, Documents originating with Willem Holtrop, inv. 14.

⁴⁰¹ Bodel Nyenhuis, *De wetgeving op drukpers en boekhandel*, Appendix B, 364–69.

⁴⁰² Quoted in Kuitert, 'In den beginne was de schrijver', 95.

number of translations marketed in the Netherlands.⁴⁰³ Unlike France, Germany and England, the Netherlands had a small population, so the number of Dutch speakers, and hence the pool of talented writers, was similarly limited. At the same time it had an inexhaustible supply of tried and tested bestsellers in the surrounding countries. There was no internationally recognized copyright law, so it often made more commercial sense for Dutch publishers to bring out a translation rather than an original work in Dutch.⁴⁰⁴ The 1817 legislation did not, after all, protect foreign authors and their publishers from being copied, but provided a kind of copyright for the Dutch publisher who was the first to advertise a translation—essentially a pirate edition. Banning the import of original foreign-language works into the Netherlands was briefly considered, but even the Dutch publishers felt that this was going too far. Compared with the royalties that foreign publishers had to pay their successful authors—a system not yet introduced into the Netherlands—all a Dutch publisher had to pay was the translator's fee. Or, as A.T. Olivier Schilperoort, one of Blussé's stable of translators, put it:

Thus the booksellers, receiving such quantities of work they cannot cope with it all, would be little inclined to spend large sums on other works, whereas he [the translator] on the other hand ... would have to be on the look-out for the necessary works and perhaps, from time to time, in order to acquire them, bid his services in competition with a colleague.⁴⁰⁵

Although according to Schilperoort it was not uncommon in England or France for authors to sell their works to whoever would pay the highest royalties, Dutch publishers would have been absolutely scandalized were an author to propose this procedure.

Just imagine! Straightforward and natural as this custom might be, it was not only rejected by the booksellers, there were even some who declared that under no circumstances whatever would they enter into such dealings, regarding them as a most vicious and pernicious innovation for them and the rest of their profession—or, as they actually said, for the book trade!⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰³ The most informative source on this aspect is Nieuweboer, 'De populariteit van het vertaalde verhalende proza', 119–41. See also L.G. Korpel, *Over het nut en de wijze der vertalingen. Nederlandse vertaalreflectie (1750–1820) in een Westeuropees kader* (Amsterdam/Atlanta 1992).

⁴⁰⁴ See also J. Kloek, *Een begrensde vaderland. De roman rond 1800 tussen nationaal karakter en internationale markt* (Amsterdam 1997) esp. 19–21.

⁴⁰⁵ A.T. Olivier Schilperoort, *De Nederlandsche drukpers* (Brussels 1828) 138.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

Schilperoort accounted for the relatively poor position of Dutch writers as compared with their fellows in other countries by explaining that there was huge competition from foreign writers, whose work could be copied with impunity in the Netherlands at virtually no cost.

It is also interesting to note his explanation for the low rate of pay for translators, editors and adaptors,⁴⁰⁷ the group Van Eeghen calls 'producers'; their rates, it should be said, were slightly more favourable than those of the original authors. The negotiating position of these 'producers', like that of the original authors, was affected by the 'restricted area in which the Dutch language is spoken'. Even if authors or 'producers' were able to bargain and gain a higher percentage of the profits from an edition of a book—in the Netherlands the author received a quarter of the selling price while German authors received two-thirds—the small editions of books in the Netherlands would mean that earnings were far too low to tempt Dutch writers to overcome their inhibitions.

Those same people who, in the spirit of our trading nation, consider it in no way beneath them to *sell* lime or bricks, paint, oil, sugar or whatever it might be, are sometimes ashamed to seek any monetary gain for their own writing, probably for no other reason than that this gain would in every case be so small. It is said that of Lord Byron that—although such a refusal is not customary in England, as we shall see—he originally intended never to accept any payment for his writings; that he maintained this stance as long as each brought in just a few hundred pounds, but that he changed his ideas when he was offered thousands of pounds for each poem.⁴⁰⁸

Schilperoort's analysis provides the beginnings of an explanation as to why the unenviable position of Dutch writers of original work, brought about by competition with literary works translated from foreign languages, did not initially lead to an improvement in the position of the 'producers'. The limited market for copy originating with Dutch writers placed publishers in the comfortable position of being able to reject authors whose demands were too high, and instead turn to translations. This might at first glance seem favourable for translators who had to put bread on the table. If we elaborate on Schilperoort's theme, we find that the translators, were,

⁴⁰⁷ The editor of the periodical *Quarterly Review* received a salary of 780 pounds sterling, which according to Schilperoort was scarcely less than the pay of a 'Minister of State ... in our country' (Schilperoort, *De Nederlandsche drukpers*, 140).

⁴⁰⁸ Schilperoort, *De Nederlandsche drukpers*, 136–37. It is not certain to what extent the percentages given by Schilperoort are accurate. The fee of between three and four guilders per sheet for translators in any event does correspond with what Van Engelen received for his work from Blussé and Holtrop (*ibid.*, 136).

however, kept in their place by the traditional taboo on writing for a living. In contrast to neighbouring countries, where this taboo had been smashed by an emancipation movement of authors, initiated by writers of repute, who were conscious of the economic value of their work in the growing market for printed matter, such a group simply never had the chance to emerge in the Netherlands.⁴⁰⁹ Individual exceptions, authors who managed to acquire a wide readership, dared not argue too forcefully for higher pay, because the amount they could command would not have been enough to compensate for the consequent loss of status, from reputable author to literary drudge.⁴¹⁰

Publishers in the Netherlands did all they could to maintain the traditional taboo against writing for payment and actively exploit it. In consequence, authors were trapped in an impossible position. The above-mentioned letter from the Association for the Promotion of the Book Trade, which was a reaction to the law of 1817, is a good example of this. Authors who worked on commission from publishers should not, they contended, be confused with 'the science- or art-loving author' for whom the protection of the law was intended.⁴¹¹ By accepting a fee, the former group had essentially already sold their rights. Those in the latter group, however, if they were ever given the chance to be published, were in danger of forfeiting their rights (*noblesse oblige*) if they started to ask for payment for their work.

Against this background, the difficult position in which Jacob Voegen van Engelen found himself, navigating laboriously between Scylla and Charibdis, becomes easier to understand. It had been decidedly clumsy of him to use the word 'hack' in a pejorative sense in his letters to Holtrop. This made it all the easier for Holtrop and Blussé to tar him with that very brush. But he might have been spared the total transformation from self-confident editor to whining hack. Once stuck in a category from which he had specifically wanted to distance himself, all he could do was beat impotently

⁴⁰⁹ M. Woodmansee, 'The genius and the copyright. Economic and legal conditions of the emergence of the "Author"', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* (1984) 425-48; H. Kiesel and P. Münch, 'Die Situation des Autors' in *ibid.* (ed.), *Gesellschaft und Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert. Voraussetzungen und Entstehung des literarischen Markts in Deutschland* (Munich 1977) 77-104.

⁴¹⁰ See L. Kuitert, 'In den beginne was de schrijver'. The explanation that the 'reward' was too little in the Netherlands, is suggested by Schilperoort in *De Nederlandsche drukpers*, esp. 136-37. He introduces the term 'salaried writer' as a less pejorative expression than 'hack' (*ibid.*, 137).

⁴¹¹ Kuitert, 'In den beginnen was de schrijver', 95-96.

on the walls of his cell—‘it is wrong not to be rich, and I suffer that wrong’—and complain about the injustice of practising a profession which—save for prostitution—was the sole occupation in which honour had to be exchanged for hard cash.

Nonetheless, tell me honestly: could anything have told me beforehand, could I have foreseen in any way, that an undertaking that occupied me and my readers in a useful and educational manner, providing my maintenance, making certain good pieces of writing publicly available, either works I had written myself, or compiled or indeed simply translated, an undertaking which provided yourselves and your colleagues with a far more comfortable existence, and which indeed you invited me to carry out—could I have suspected that at a later date you would reproach and blame me for such an undertaking, I say, in the most scornful and cutting manner?⁴¹²

For a few years after this public conflict with Holtrop and Blussé, Van Engelen continued as editor of the *Kabinet*—which indeed survived longer than its rival *Jaarboeken*, although it soon had to abandon the plan of two-monthly publication.⁴¹³ In 1784 the publishers tried to disguise this by antedating the third volume, that of 1782, which was only completed in that year. The publishers excused the delay by saying that Van Engelen wished to introduce his successors in the last issue of that volume: one of them was Jan David Pasteur, the co-author who had gone with him when he transferred from Blussé’s to the Leiden publishers.⁴¹⁴ The other two were the surgeon from Leiden, A. Balthazar, and S.L. Brugmans.⁴¹⁵ When the following issue, for the year 1783, finally appeared in 1788 (four years later) not one of these successors was listed in the periodical. The Leiden physician H.A. Bake had apparently picked up the baton. There was also a new publisher, the Leiden firm of F. de Does. The quality of the periodical, both in content and appearance, had appreciably deteriorated. It had shrunk in size from 617 to 431 pages, the paper was cheaper, the printing more slip-

⁴¹² *Natuur- genees- en huishoudkundig kabinet* no. 1 (1779), ‘Apologie’, XI.

⁴¹³ *Genees- natuur- en huishoudkundige jaarboeken*, after 1782 renamed *Nieuwe genees- natuur- en huishoudkundige jaarboeken* and in 1785 again renamed the *Algemeene genees- natuur- en huishoudkundige jaarboeken*; it existed from 1778 to 1787. In the final number (6th volume, 2nd issue, 1787) there is no announcement of the journal’s demise. The periodical had a total of seventeen volumes each with six instalments in two sections. *Genees- natuur- en huishoudkundig kabinet* ran from 1779 until 1791 but after the departure of Van Engelen in 1782 was published at ever-increasing intervals. It had a total of four volumes, each having six instalments in two sections.

⁴¹⁴ In the coup d’état of 22 January 1798 he was one of those arrested and imprisoned in Huis ten Bosch (Elias and Schölvinck, *Volksrepresentanten en wetgevers*, 182-183).

⁴¹⁵ *Kabinet*, 1782, volume 3, ‘Woord aan het publiek’, 3.

shod, the writing more prolix and less wide-ranging. Most of this issue was taken up by an article by Bake on 'women's complaints' and a translation by Michell about 'the remarkable interaction between the head and the private parts, most useful for procreation'.⁴¹⁶ The periodical struggled on like this until 1791 after which, without further notice, it quietly expired.

And what of Van Engelen? He ended his career as foreign correspondent for the *Kabinet* in Paramaribo (the capital of Surinam, then Dutch Guyana) where alongside his activities as a lecturer he made another attempt to set up a medical journal – *De Surinaamsche Artz* (The Surinam Physician), which was particularly concerned with the disastrous effects of the tropical climate on the health of the white population.⁴¹⁷

Were one to open the book by the learned and inventive cleric De Paauw concerning the nature of the air and the soil in the New World, a part of which we *poor Surinamers* inhabit, then even the Seven Plagues of Egypt are scarce able to suggest a climate of such unpleasantness, such unwholesomeness, such deathly malignancy.⁴¹⁸

Nevertheless it was not the debilitating tropical climate which was said to be responsible for the delays with which the journal constantly had to contend. Van Engelen offered another explanation: apparently he had been suffering from some kind of 'mental disorder'. His 'ever observant mind' had been occupied by other subjects, the results of which he would shortly reveal to his readers.⁴¹⁹ He simply could not abandon his writing, a harmless aberration to which he felt Alexander Pope's words applied: 'a consequential ill that freedom draws. A bad effect, but ... from a noble cause'.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁶ Hermanus Adrianus Bake (1754-1805) studied first theology and then medicine in Leiden. In 1799 he wrote a book on midwifery, commissioned by the government, *Leerboek der verloskunde* (Delprat, *De geschiedenis der Nederlandsche geneeskundige tijdschriften*, 101 note 1).

⁴¹⁷ The periodical was printed by W.H. Poppelman, a printer in Surinam. A facsimile appeared with an introduction by G.A. Lindeboom in 1781 (Dr J. Voegen van Engelen, *De Surinaamsche artz* [= *Uitgaven van de natuurwetenschappelijke studiekring voor Suriname en de Nederlandse Antillen*, no. 109])

⁴¹⁸ *De Surinaamsche Artz*, 60.

⁴¹⁹ However, he published nothing more after *De Surinaamsche Artz*. The last we hear of him is in 1792, when he accepted his nomination as a foreign member of the Dutch society of sciences in Haarlem. He probably died shortly afterwards (Lindeboom, *De Surinaamsche Artz*, XXII)

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, 57. (A. Pope, *Odyss.* VI p. 79.) Alexander Pope (1688-1744) was the first major English poet who successfully lived on what he earned from his work, without the support of a patron (Woodmansee, 'The genius and the copyright', 428).

CHAPTER FIVE

FROM READER TO PUBLISHER, THE THIRD BLUSSÉ GENERATION: BUILDING A FAMILY EMPIRE

'The Best-intentioned Father': Upbringing and Education

Introduction: Reading Recommendations from an Eighteenth-century Educator

D. But your advice, my Friend, your advice?

I. Remove all the sentimental Books, yes, all those that are Novel-like, from Alexis and Sofia's Room, for the best Novels today are poison for both of them. Replace them with simple moral writings and lock the other Works away.¹

This quotation is taken from a dialogue between an anxious father and his friend published in a popular periodical in 1788. The father is worried about his children's heightened sensitivity—'Something is not quite right, my Friend'—and his friend responds by blaming their exaggerated sentimentality on unrestricted novel-reading. Similar arguments can be found in enlightened pedagogical literature from the late eighteenth century, in which novels are regarded with mistrust, if not downright censure, and parents are advised to select their children's reading matter with care.² To help parents do just that, many of these tracts offer suggestions in which the same books appear again and again, including a number of titles from the Blussé list. The work of Pluche, for example, was highly regarded as an educational resource by W.E. de Perponcher and A. Hulshoff.³ It was thought that children deprived of such works would run the risk of devel-

¹ 'Zamenspraak over 't overdreevene gevoel', *De Nieuwe Nederlandsche Spectator*, no. 27 (1788) 209-16, 216.

² See also A. Baggerman, 'Otto van Eck en de anderen. Sporen van jonge lezers in schriftelijke bronnen', in: B. Dongelmans, N. van Rotterdam, J. Salman et al., eds., *Tot volle waschdom. Nieuwe hoofdstukken voor de geschiedenis van de kinder- en jeugdliteratuur* (Zutphen 2000). Thanks to Rudolf Dekker who gave me permission when writing this section to draw from our joint research file 'reading advice'. Thanks also to Willeke Los who is conducting doctoral research on views of Dutch educationalists in the eighteenth century and who gave me, entirely in keeping with the object of her research, some reading advice.

³ W.E. de Perponcher, *Onderwijs voor kinderen* III (3 vols; Utrecht 1782) (foreword) X; A. Hulshoff, 'Verhandeling over de zedelijke en verstandelijke opvoeding', in: *Verhandelin-*



31. Children reading under parental supervision on the title page of a volume published by A. Blussé & Son in 1800. The title page gives information not only on the way the stories can be read, but also the age group for which they are intended. National Library, The Hague.

oping a temperament that is 'not vigorous'.⁴ Betje Wolff indirectly recommends Wagenaar's *Vaderlandsche historie* (Dutch history) to the 'Dutch mothers' who are wise enough to abandon their games of whist in favour of an educational task: 'Is history, both that of our native land as well as that of other regions, completely unknown to you? ... But we are lacking in so many ways—Quite true, perhaps! But that does not excuse you—READ!' ⁵ Abraham de Bosson is even more explicit: 'Let your offspring learn the history of their land; and Wagenaar will lead them by the hand'.⁶

At the same time, however, educationalists were worried about the danger of breaking children's spirits by feeding them too much factual knowledge. Parents, Hulshoff stresses, should prevent their child from developing into the 'dry, pedantic' type who at around the age of fifteen shows no interest in 'the English Pamela, Clarissa or Grandison'—of which Blussé published a compilation—but 'reads nothing but the fleshless ancients'. Young children, too, of 'six or eight years of age' who do not become restless 'when the newspaper is being read ... if such a child would not rather be jumping up or listening to stories from Mother Goose, but instead sits with the solemnity of a sickroom visitor', this should be a cause of great concern, and adults should not praise such behaviour, as is the common practice.⁷ To cultivate a true 'thirst for reading' in children that will equip them for a lifetime of constantly broadening horizons, they should not be turned against it from the very start but should continue to experience it as a pleasure. This pleasure should be stimulated by offering children both non-fiction and 'interesting, instructive and moral tales'.⁸ At the same time the author warns that 'their taste should not be corrupted by the hack-work of shabby Novels, which are often concocted by hungry hirelings'.⁹ Trembly urges parents not to allow their children to read indiscriminately: 'For in this way their reading matter over the course of one full year will resemble the absurd patchwork of a harlequin's costume'.¹⁰

gen uitgegeven door de Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen te Haarlem IX, part II (Haarlem 1765) 44.

⁴ Hulshoff, *ibid.*

⁵ B. Wolff, *Proeve over de opvoeding, aan de Nederlandsche moeders* (2nd ed. 1780; Amsterdam 1977) 59.

⁶ A. de Bosson, *De nationaale opvoeding der Nederlandsche jeugd, natuur- en zedekundig beschouwd in drie zangen* (Amsterdam 1780) 59.

⁷ Hulshoff, *Verhandeling*, 38.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁰ J. Trembly, 'Antwoord op de vraag, Welke is de nuttigheid der zielkunde in de opvoeding en bestiering van den mensch?' in: *Verhandelingen uitgegeven door de Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen te Haarlem* XX (Haarlem 1781) 51.

That was why Betje Wolff and other writers such as De Bosson, Chatelain and Hulshoff all insisted that reading be guided and monitored by parents. As De Bosson puts it, children's reading should be 'directed as need requires'.¹¹ To ensure that children do not absorb information that is not yet suitable for them, parents should build up 'a decent children's library'¹² and classify the books according to the reader's age.¹³ Working from these principles, the educationalist De Perponcher wrote a manual in which knowledge was combined with moral lessons that grew along with the young reader: his four-volume *Onderwys voor kinderen van drie tot zeven jaar* (Educating children from three to seven years of age). Although Blussé did not publish this work, he did give it to his own children to read. In his foreword to the first volume, De Perponcher explains that the information in the successive volumes has been introduced step by step, always responsive to the children's perceptual world at different developmental stages.¹⁴ This is why children should not be allowed to move on to the second volume until they have firmly grasped everything in the first. 'Firmly grasped' should not be confused with memorisation, a method the author decisively does not favour. He has taken care to combine the useful with the pleasurable in his books so as to prevent children 'from losing their taste for reading altogether in the end'.¹⁵ Parents are advised to make the subjects he deals with as tangible as possible by fetching the actual object or by taking the book outdoors and pointing out the plants, trees, crops or animals that appear in it, preferably allowing them to be touched.¹⁶ In his choice of subjects he has paid careful attention to the practicalities of implementation.

The influence of the German philanthropists is apparent in this approach. These educationalists, among whom Christian Gotthilf Salzmann and Johann Bernhard Basedow were the most outstanding figures, devoted themselves to formulating a practical interpretation of Rousseau and Locke's ideas. To do this they developed a number of educational 'testing stations', one of which was the Philantropinium, set up by Basedow, which

¹¹ De Bosson, *De nationaale opvoeding*, 44.

¹² H.A. Chatelain, 'Antwoord op de vraag, voorgesteld door de Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen te Haarlem: hoe moet men het verstand en het hart der kinderen bestieren', in: *Verhandelingen uitgegeven door de Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen te Haarlem* IX, part II (Haarlem 1765) 69.

¹³ Wolff, *Proeve over de opvoeding*, 84.

¹⁴ De Perponcher, *Onderwijs voor kinderen*, I, Foreword I-XXIII.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, XII.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, XII-XVI.



32. Picture of an educational walk in the *Kleine katechismus der natuur voor kinderen* by J.F. Martinet (Amsterdam 1779) Otto, too, read this 'small catechism of nature for children'. National Library, The Hague.

provided for children's mental and physical education by using teaching materials that were tailored to their stage of development. They also experimented with visual teaching aids, learning through play, physical training, sound nutritional habits and a well thought-out system of punishments and rewards.¹⁷

De Perponcher's educational views and his passion for publishing (in addition to *Onderwys voor kinderen* he wrote at least seven other books for children) prompted a contemporary of his to remark, with some irony, that with such a father, De Perponcher's young son was doomed to develop into a *modèle et chef d'oeuvre de l'éducation*.¹⁸ My study of Otto van Eck, an eighteenth-century boy whose education and reading habits are known from the diary he kept from his tenth to his seventeenth year, reveals that this certainly could be said of Otto.¹⁹ There are striking similarities between the advice of the educationalists and the way in which Otto was dealt with by his parents, the books he was given to read and the way he was expected to read them. Otto's parents required that he keep a diary so they could follow his developments close at heel, using it as an aid to introduce changes in his behaviour and ideas. Not only was his reading material subject to his parents' stringent selection criteria—with the titles in his diary one could easily furnish an exhibition on suitable eighteenth-century juvenile reading matter—but the reading process itself was usually supervised, after which his reaction could be read yet again in the diary by his parents. Even the recommended educational walks in the fresh air—with or without De Perponcher—were recorded in this diary with unerring regularity.

Otto van Eck grew up in the Enlightened Dutch ruling class and was the favourite nephew of the reform-minded first president of the Dutch National Assembly, Peter Paulus, but there was nothing exceptional about his

¹⁷ J. Lenders, *De burger en de volksschool. Culturele en mentale achtergronden van een onderwijshervorming Nederland 1780-1850* (Nijmegen 1988) 138-40.

¹⁸ P.J. Buijnters, 'Nederlandse kinderboeken uit de achttiende eeuw', in: H. Bekkering et al., eds., *De hele Biblebontse berg. De geschiedenis van het kinderboek in Nederland & Vlaanderen van de middeleeuwen tot heden* (Amsterdam 1990) 194.

¹⁹ A. Baggerman, 'Lezen tot de laatste snik. Otto van Eck en zijn dagelijkse literatuur (1780-1798)', *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse boekgeschiedenis* 1 (1994) 57-88; A. Baggerman, 'The cultural universe of a Dutch Child, Otto van Eck and his literature', *Eighteenth Century Studies* 31 (1997) 129-34. For the complete text of the diary: A. Baggerman, A., R. Dekker, eds., *Het dagboek van Otto van Eck (1791-1797)* (Hilversum 1998) [= *Egodocumenten* 12]. About Otto's experiences, in particular his perception of time, also see A. Baggerman and R. Dekker, 'Otto's horloge: Verlichting, deugd en tijd in de achttiende eeuw', *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 25 (2000) 1-24.

model education. In the Blussé family archive two crumpled-up daily schedules were unearthed which show that Pieter Blussé, too, was greatly inspired by the educational advice of his day when it came to educating his children.

Daily Schedules, Reading Matter and Worthy Models

Adolph Blussé was only fifteen in October 1794 when, having just returned from his German boarding school, he was initiated into the book trade. The schedule that Pieter Blussé had drawn up for him, in order that he might 'be a good steward of the talents which God had bestowed upon him; and also meet the expectations to which his parents have such a rightful claim in view of the education and affection they have given him,' covered far more subject matter than the book trade alone.²⁰ The schedule began before the start of the working day. Adolph was obliged 'to accustom himself to rising at six o'clock in the morning, washing, making a humble obeisance before God and then getting dressed. Before or at seven o'clock he must take a quick glance around the house and the shop'. The rest of the days' activities were then specified according to the day. Sundays were devoted to worship, on which he was to concentrate his attention for the entire day:

He must not neglect to attend divine services with a devout heart that is open to learning, once in the French Church and once in the Dutch, and between these two in the English Church, when he has made more progress in that language.

In the time left between these church services he was expected to immerse himself in the Book of Proverbs, the Gospels and Gellert's *Zedelessen* (Moral Lessons). De Perponcher's *Onderwijs voor kinderen* was also on the list. Adolph was required to translate from one to three questions from this book in French and then to provide 'carefully thought-out' answers to them in the same language. After this 'free' day the normal work week inexorably continued: 'Monday, and so on, let his eye be attentive to everything having to do with the shop and the business'. His activities in the shop were specified as 'writing', 'folding' and 'stitching'. Just as his father before him had spent his free school hours and his holidays binding books, so now Adolph was being initiated into the same traditional skills of the trade. In between his other jobs, he was urged to keep track of book advertisements in the newspapers and to maintain an index of the titles mentioned in them along

²⁰ GAD, BFA, inv. 29, 8 October 1794.



33. Portrait miniature of Adolph Blussé (1779-1846). Private Collection.

with their prices: 'if this cannot be done at the present moment, the day must not be allowed to rush past without its having been accomplished'. He had a break from eleven to twelve o'clock, when he was to 'amuse himself by playing the flute'. From three to five:

he must devote himself exclusively to his study of the English language. ... After five o'clock let the shop once more be his study and delight, as it should be during his free hours on the days that follow.

Just like Pieter during his apprenticeship at Loveringh's, Adolph was given extra lessons in English. On Tuesdays and Fridays he went to lectures given by the Reverend Hunter, the minister of the English church in Dordrecht. When these were over 'he is not to abandon the shop', where in addition to his regular activities he was expected to keep himself 'occupied' by translating 'an easy Latin author'. After the evening meal, which on Tuesdays seems to have been over by half past six, 'he is to amuse himself by improving his drawing skills'. On Wednesdays they ate earlier. Then when six o'clock arrived it was time for 'some relaxation on the flute'. His lunch break that day was devoted to making a German translation of Te Waters's *Vaderlandsche historie*. On Thursday at noon his schedule had him working on a translation from French, for which his father has chosen the *Histoire du gouvernements du Nord* by J. Williams. Friday was spent in the same way

as Tuesday, and Saturday afternoon was reserved for a translation of *Interessante anekdoten, Characterzüge und merkwürdige Begebenheiten aus dem Leben berühmter und berüchtigter Menschen*, alternating with *Bemerkungen über der Lehrart Jesu*. The whole timetable was concluded with a 'walk or some other seemly relaxation'.

The schedule that Pieter drew up for his oldest son Abraham, who kept it carefully wrapped and labelled 'papers from my academic days', must date back to a decade earlier, around 1784, when Abraham was about twelve years old and his father held a high position in the Patriots' volunteer corps.²¹ In this far more briefly-worded schedule there is no hint of compulsory amusements like playing the flute, drawing and walking. Mondays and Wednesdays end with the instruction to attend military exercises 'between 5 & 6'. In a poem that his grandfather wrote in the autumn of 1784 on the occasion of Abraham's 'promotion to the third class of the Latin school', one can read that Abraham's role was not restricted to that of spectator. He also wielded the sword:

Oh my namesake, what a prize!
Led to school by Minerva the wise.
With a sword from Pallas, here you stand,
A native blade gripped in your hand.²²

The rest of Abraham's daily programme, probably drawn up during a holiday from the Latin school, concerns his reading. Like Adolph, Abraham was required to both read and translate. On Monday and Thursday his assignment was to do a translation of the *Mémoires d'un protestant, condamné aux galères de France pour cause de religion* by Jean Marteilhe, the author who died in 1777.²³ Tuesdays were devoted to translation from English of the biography of John Newton, published in 1784 and in Dutch translation

²¹ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 23.

²² A. Blussé, *Aan mijn kleinzoon Abraham Blussé, bij zijne bevordering tot de derde classe der latynsche school* (Dordrecht 1784) (GAD, Bibliotheek 111.413). Children taking part in military exercises was not uncommon in the heyday of the Patriot movement. Even in Otto's diary, started at a time when the volunteer corps had long been disbanded, an echo still reverberates of the sensation that children, too, must have felt at these manifestations of militancy. Otto writes that he and his friend Iman Berkhout, son of the celebrated Patriot Willem Teding van Berkhout, conducted exercises with the goats. (Baggerman and Dekker, *Het dagboek van Otto van Eck*, 291).

²³ [Jean Marteilhe], *Gedenkschriften van eenen protestant veroordeeld op de galeijen van Vrankrijk, ter oorzake van den godsdienst* (Rotterdam 1757). See also the introduction to A. Savie, *La vie aux galères, souvenirs d'un prisonnier. D'après les documents d'archives et les mémoires* (Paris 1909).



34. This drawing made by Abraham's younger brother Hendrik in 1794 was found in the Blussé family archive. The uniform he drew bears a strong resemblance to the uniforms worn by the members of the Dordrecht civic militia 'De Vrijheid' around 1783. Dordrecht Municipal Archives.



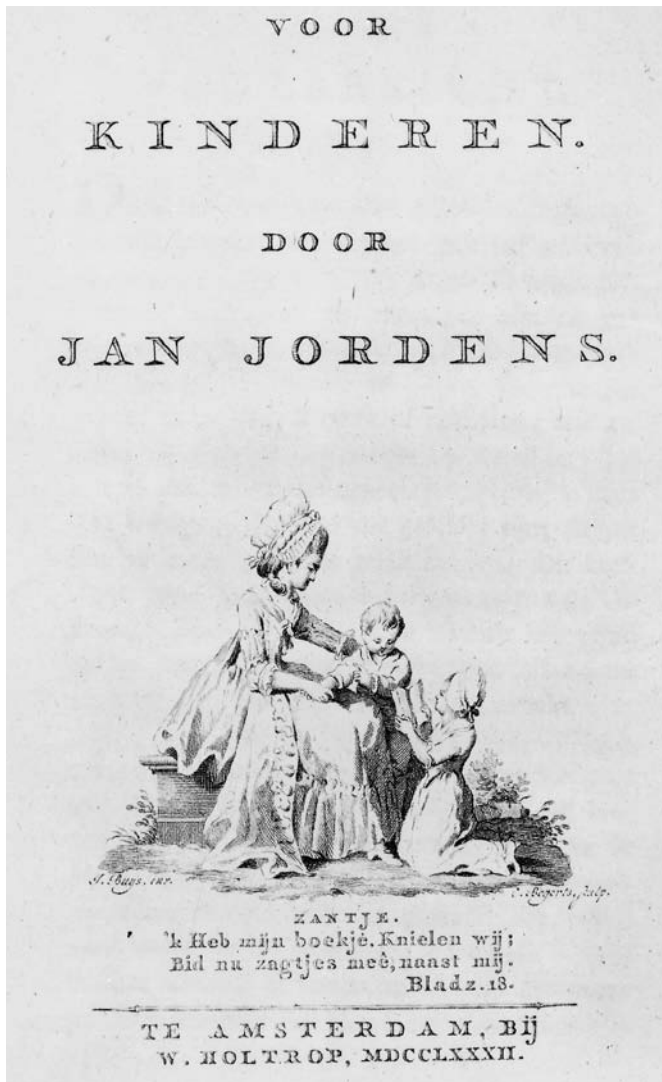
35. Uniforms of the civic militiamen belonging to the 'Freedom' corps (with blue tailcoats). Engraving of 1783 by K.F. Bendorp after drawings by J.C. Bendorp. Dordrecht Municipal Archives.

the same year as *Gods genade en vrijmagtig albestuur ontdekt in de zeldzaame levensgevallen en zonderlinge bekeering van Johan Newton*.²⁴ On Wednesday Abraham only had to concentrate on his Dutch, which involved preparing for his catechetical training with the Reverend Rozendaal. In Pieter's autobiography we learn that this minister had been hand-picked from the pool of Dordrecht clergymen:

Conscious that knowledge without religion does not make men happy, I desired to find that man who could give my offspring regular, intelligent instruction and and suitable discourse on the truths of blessedness; after repeated attendance at one of the catechetical classes at the Nieuwe Kerk (on Sunday afternoons after the service the minister would spend an hour talking with the teachers), my choice fell upon father Rozendaal. And it is from this good man's instruction that not only my oldest but also my other children have learned such a great deal of good.²⁵

²⁴ In 1807 Blussé published the work by J. Newton, *De dringende kracht van Christus' liefde*.

²⁵ GAD, BFA, inv. 11.



36. The title page of the volume of religious verse by Jan Jordens, which Abraham read, also feature children reading, invariably in the company of a parent. National Library, The Hague.

Friday was reserved for a translation from one of the works of the French Enlightenment philosophers and encyclopaedists, Jean François Marmon-
tel. On Saturday Abraham was to work on a piece copied from the *Kleine
zielkunde voor kinderen* by the German philanthropic author J.H. Campe,
and on Sunday it was time for still more contemplation and prayer, when

he could choose between a prayer 'from Jordens'—a reference to *Voor kinderen* by the Leiden theologian H.J. Jordens, published in 1782 by a Blussé associate, Holtrop—and a prayer from 'Snel'.²⁶

This picture of Abraham and Adolph's literary diet, covering only a week of their lives, is rather fragmented. Nevertheless, it does merit closer inspection. One striking feature is the pre-programmed and supervised nature of the reading list, so warmly recommended by the educationalists. This probably explains why most of the titles served up to the children were not of recent vintage: if parents did not already know the works from their own youth, they could vet the books themselves.²⁷ The recommended variation in children's reading matter is also reflected in these daily programmes.

The fact that the young Blussés had little say in the choice of books they were to read does not mean that they were condemned to dull monotony. The literature supplied to them was just as varied in genre and content as that of Otto van Eck. Adolph and his brother Abraham were given five different titles to read in one week, from collections of stories to historical, geographical and theological works. But exactly which books did the educationalists have in mind when advising parents to alternate between non-fiction and 'interesting, instructive and moral tales'? De Perponcher recommended Campe's *Robinson Crusoe*, while Betje Wolff would have

²⁶ There are indications that Pieter and Sophia's daughters were also encouraged to read. Thus Abraham Blussé Sr bequeathed to his granddaughter Elisabeth Sophia Blussé a small book cabinet (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 3, Abraham's will dated 7 March 1806). From a number of letters from her father during her time at boarding school, it appears that he regularly sent her books: 'My dear daughter! You were desirous of a good book. How happily I fulfil your request. Here you have one printed on the finest quality paper and with the best binding. I value this work at twice its worth because it points the way to the greatest happiness and to the most agreeable life under all circumstances. I pray that it may be just as profitable to you! Do you like it, my precious Sophia? You will like it all the more by feeling yourself armed against the temptations of your age and sex. You will read it again and again, and write to me that you desire more such, and I will straightway send you the two other volumes of this work which are no less excellent' (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 4, 15 July 1808).

²⁷ The same can be observed with respect to the titles that Otto van Eck read (see Baggerman and Dekker, *Het dagboek van Otto van Eck*, 288–90). An example of a reader of current titles is Alexander van Goltstein, a distant relation of Otto van Eck. Alexander started his diary later in life, at the age of seventeen, not because his parents forced him to, as Otto's had, but at his own initiative. He was also able to make his own selection from the books available in his day. Most of the books entered in this diary, which is far more intimate than Otto's, were very recent publications. Fourteen of the books he noted down were published in the same year or a year earlier (J. Limonard, *De vertrouwde van mijn hart. Het dagboek van Alexander van Goltstein [1801–1808]* [Hilversum 1994] [= *Egodokumenten* 4], 132–37 contains a more detailed literature list by Limonard).

suggested the collections of stories specially written for children that she herself had translated, such as *Avondtijdkortingen van het kasteel* or *Adèle en Theodoor*. Perhaps these books had been treated in previous weeks or years or were being planned for the future. During the week for which we have documentation, however, Abraham Blussé read works of a quite different nature for his education and enjoyment: the story of a martyr and a conversion story. Uninteresting as they might sound, the stories Pieter chose are anything but boring. The autobiography of Jean Marteilhe, for instance, might be considered something of an adventure story. This Huguenot, who had been condemned to spend years as a galley slave for his religious beliefs, was released in 1713 when his freedom was purchased by the English Queen Anne.²⁸ He wrote a book about his experiences that reads like a Christianised, eighteenth-century boys' adventure tale. It was published in 1757 both in Dutch and French²⁹ and may have been part of Pieter Blussé's juvenile reading fare. The Blussé family, who were descended from Walloon refugees, must have felt a certain affinity with Marteilhe.

The John Newton conversion story that Abraham read dates to the same period as that of Jean Marteilhe, reason enough to consider it for possible inclusion in his father's juvenile book collection. It was first published in 1764—when Pieter was sixteen years old—and translated into Dutch in 1767. Like the memoirs of the former galley slave, it contains enough elements to hold the attention of a twelve-year-old boy. However, in this autobiography about 'dangerous wanderings at sea as a sailor, the mistreatment of slaves on the coast of Guinea, and God's miraculous protection and preservation from all those dangers' the roles are reversed,³⁰ for Newton is describing his life as a slave trader. The conversion in this story is a religious one, not a turnabout from slave trader to abolitionist—that happened much later.³¹ He describes how his profligate life at sea had made him lose any sense of religious conviction until during one stormy, dangerous journey a miracle occurred and he repented—the so-called second conversion that was so crucial to the pietistic way of thinking. By self-tuition he worked his way up to becoming a lay preacher and later was even ordained an

²⁸ Savie, *La vie aux galères*.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 190.

³⁰ John Newton, *Gods genade, en zyn vrymagtig albestuur*, T. Haweis ed. (Rotterdam 1767), foreword by the printer.

³¹ In 1788, thirty-four years after his *Authentic narrative* was published, Newton wrote a pamphlet against the slave trade titled *Thoughts upon the African slave trade* (see B. Martin and M. Spurell, *The journal of a slave trader [John Newton] 1750-1754*. B. Martin and M. Spurell, eds. [London 1962] XV).

Anglican priest.³² In this sense the book can be seen as the history of a self-made man, a theme which would have appealed to Pieter Blussé and certainly to his father Abraham Blussé, himself an autodidact of humble descent. On the other hand, Newton's mixture of anti-rationalistic, pietistic, puritanical and strict orthodox Calvinist notions³³ was not really in keeping with Pieter Blussé's practical, fairly down-to-earth view of the world—and certainly not with his aversion to theological hair-splitting, as we shall see in the next chapter. It would have been far more compatible with the perceptions of Abraham's grandfather, Abraham Blussé Sr. Perhaps the book was given to Pieter Blussé by his father back in his youth, and, confident of the contents, he then passed it on to his own children.

The views of Abraham Blussé Sr, who emerges as the godfather of the family in more ways than one, can be reconstructed on the basis of his poems, as for instance his *Herdersklagt over de runderpest* (Shepherd's lament on the cattle plague) from 1755 in which he expresses a scarcely enlightened view regarding divine punishment for sinful living:³⁴

And must my cattle for my sins atone;
My precious cattle! who for me alone,
Did offer up their udders twice a day,
...
Yet here I stand in shame, with unbent head,
Oh, had I been a humble man instead
It might have served to turn away God's wrath.
Now where am I to go? What hidden path?
My bosom heaves, I fear my heart must break,
That innocent cows should suffer for my sake.³⁵

We see this point of view partially reflected in a remark of Pieter's in one of his love letters to Sophia on the flooding of the district of Tielerwaard. Here, however, the reference to God's wrath has the ring of the obligatory and lacks the corresponding fatalism: 'Heaven forbid that the Lord should further stretch forth his hand in anger over our land, that the misery and poverty may increase no more'.³⁶

³² *Dictionary of National Biography* (vol. 26; London 1891) 395-98.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Buisman uses eighteenth-century views on the causes of the cattle plague as a way of measuring the propagation of Enlightened ideas in the Netherlands (J.W. Buisman, *Tussen vroomheid en Verlichting. Een cultuurhistorisch en -sociologisch onderzoek naar enkele aspecten van de Verlichting in Nederland [1755-1810]* [Zwolle 1992] 109-40).

³⁵ A[braham] B[lussé], *Veezorg, herdersklagt over de runderpest* (1755) (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 42).

³⁶ GAD, BFA, inv. 11, 8 November 1770.

Even more revealing of Abraham's religious views and their influence on those of his children and grandchildren is the sole fragment from his diary that was retrieved from the Blussé archives. It suggests that Abraham was still attempting to influence Pieter's choice of literature long into his adulthood. In the preamble to the fragment, Abraham speaks dismissively of two books loaned to him by Pieter and Sophia and strongly advises them to read something else:

My most dear children!

Herewith I return Lavater's Diary,³⁷ this comes back to you as swiftly as his Views on Eternity.³⁸ And why? My religious views, my Views after Eternity, do not agree with his. If someone had asked me, what is your opinion of Lavater? I should have replied that judging from what I have read of him I take him to be a *Zealot who puts his trust in salvation by works* [italics by Abr.; AB]. I lay the fault at the door of his translator and not at his own—the foreword reads like an effort to exonerate him of accusations of fanaticism, but this is deceptive, for why would that be necessary if it were not true? I would counsel my children to lay aside this man's writings and rather devote themselves to Theron and Aspasio. By the Lord's merciful blessing this may be of much advantage to them.³⁹

Abraham's comments allow us to sound out his religious attitudes. His rejection of the pietistic Swiss clergyman Lavater in favour of the equally pietistic English Calvinist Methodist James Hervey, author of the extremely popular *Theron and Aspasio*, is not the sort of attitude that would spring naturally from Abraham's rather 'godly' religious beliefs. An examination of the buying habits of two pietistic frequenters of the Tijl bookshop in Zwolle shows that Lavater, James Hervey and his kindred spirit John Newton were not at all incompatible. Lady Fenna Elisabeth van Haersolte left the bookshop with Lavater's *Geheime dagboek* (Private Diary), two works by Hervey, the *Gemeenzame brieven* (Intimate Letters) of John Newton and a book by the pietistic theologian Nahuys, possibly from Blussé's list.⁴⁰ Lady

³⁷ J.K. Lavater's *Geheimes Tagebuch von einem Beobachter seiner selbst* was first published anonymously in Leipzig in 1771 but was soon afterwards attributed to him, which he later confirmed. It was first issued in Dutch translation by the Amsterdam publisher Martinus de Bruyn under the title *Geheim dagboek*.

³⁸ This is an allusion to Lavater's *Aussichten in die Ewigkeit* (Zürich 1768-1778), translated by J.W. van Haar, that was brought out in 1779 by the Amsterdam publisher J. Allart under the title *Uitzigten in de eeuwigheid*. In this book Lavater tries to envision the state of the soul from death to resurrection. The metaphysical tenor of the *Uitzigten* clashes strongly with enlightened rationalism (P.J. Buijnsters, *Hiëronymus van Alphen* [1746-1803] [Assen 1973] 81; A. Johannes, *Johann Kaspar Lavater als pastor* [Kampen 1976] 16-20).

³⁹ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 52. The extract dates from 29 October 1780.

⁴⁰ Brouwer, *Lezen en schrijven*, 218.

Anna Agnes Bentinck showed practically the same preferences. She opted for a range of books including Newton, Lavater and Nahuys.⁴¹ The poet Hieronymus van Alphen was also both a Lavater devotee and a great fan of James Hervey.⁴² What, then, was Abraham's objection to Lavater?

Abraham's views on this matter had not entirely crystallised. This may be why he turned against the anonymous translator, whose wording and especially whose laudatory foreword were supposed to have created the impression—by claiming the very opposite—that Lavater was a 'zealot who puts his trust in salvation by works'. Yet the foreword seems fairly innocent at first glance. The translator gives a long account of the diary's publication history, then refers to the original foreword and adds a couple of pages in which he recommends the author

as a scrupulous and sincere observer of his inner self, ... who keeps a watchful eye on all the gates of his heart and on the most primary, hidden thoughts and actions of his spirit, and strictly assesses them; all with the Christian aim of coming to know himself better, noticing signs of divine Providence in all things and following Him with childlike trust, ever increasing in the practice of ordering his life in all its ways in faith according to the precepts of the Gospel. In this he gives the Christian reader an example worthy of imitation, which, it would seem, has been the author's chief aim in writing his diary and making it public.⁴³

This is followed by a defence of keeping a diary, a pietistic habit that may be 'viewed nowadays as uncouth, new and unsavoury' but has many precedents among the prophets and apostles.⁴⁴ The translator refers to the confessions of Augustine and the diary of the Scottish theologian John Forbes of Corse, and observes that Lavater's diary is more wide-ranging, more useful and more interesting than Forbes's.⁴⁵ It must have been the translator's last remark that made Abraham lose any respect he may have had for him and expose him as a zealot. The pride that may have been in evidence in his earlier recommendations—holding up Lavater as a worthy model for all Christians—may have irritated Abraham as well.

This, however, does not completely explain why Abraham would accuse the author of putting his trust in 'good works'. This should be understood as a serious accusation within the context of eighteenth-century orthodox

⁴¹ Ibid., 219.

⁴² On his admiration for Lavater see Buijnsters, *Hiëronymus van Alphen*, 80-89. On his spiritual affinity with Hervey, *ibid.*, 202.

⁴³ Lavater, *Geheim dagboek*, XII.

⁴⁴ Ibid., XIII.

⁴⁵ Ibid., XIV.



37. Scene from Lavater's *Geheim Dagboek*. While dusting the books in Lavater's study, the maid knocked over an inkpot, thus ruining some of the papers on his desk and causing him to lose his temper. This outburst is the cause of guilty feelings and much reflection on his lack of self-control. National Library, The Hague.

Calvinist thinking. Whether it was the fault of the translator or not, Lavater gave the impression of being a person who hoped to obtain salvation through good works. In other words, he would be bypassing the grace of God, which is of crucial importance in the doctrine of predestination. The basis of Abraham's condemnation of Lavater's *Geheime dagboek* was not the practice of keeping a diary as such but of his having what Abraham suspected to be a hidden agenda. Apparently Abraham saw Lavater's striving for perfection through his diary as a 'modern' variant of a Roman Catholic indulgence. And nothing could have been more reprehensible in orthodox Dutch Reformed circles than that.

The extent to which a person can influence his own salvation was also the basis of the controversy between the Arminian Methodist John Wesley and the Calvinist Methodist James Hervey. It is no accident that Abraham makes a point of recommending Hervey's *Theron and Aspasio* to his son Pieter as an alternative to Lavater, for in this book the doctrine of 'Imputed

Righteousness' is fiercely defended.⁴⁶ Just as a telescope shows a person things that are invisible to the naked eye, so Christian Revelation was said to disclose truths that he would not be able to grasp by his own powers of reasoning:

It is strange for our natural comprehension, and rightly so, that we would have died in Adam and been lost through the disobedience of our first parents. No less is it true that we will be made alive in CHRIST, and our restoration be derived from his Imputed Righteousness.⁴⁷

In his book, Hervey emphasises the innate sinfulness of man, who is dependent on divine grace for his salvation, all his piety and conversions (including second conversions) notwithstanding. The recurring use of the expression 'free grace' or 'life-giving grace' in Abraham's own daily report is not without reason. Abraham wrote this report under the inspiration of Lavater's diary (to say he was joking may be putting it a bit too lightly) and sent it along with the detested literature:

I have never kept a diary of my life and religious experiences. I have from time to time considered doing so—but it surely would have been strewn with feelings of my own depravity. This present day—here is a sample, taste and see if it resembles Lavater in any way—has not been a bad day for me.⁴⁸

Following Lavater, Abraham then gives a meticulous, hour-by-hour report of his activities and stirrings of his soul, so dripping with piety that it could be taken for a pastiche of Lavater:

I was hesitant in rising. Then it occurred to me that this day having been dedicated to God, and I being in his service, I arose, quit my idle place of slumber, and pulled on my clothes. I awakened my spouse with exhortations, reminding her that we must hasten to worship. Not a moment did she hesitate but followed my example. Both of us being awake according to the body, my soul embarked on a series of well-ordered thoughts; it thought about how God had preserved us through the passing night and about God's goodness in raising us up in health. Filled with such feelings, we bowed ourselves in humble prayer, the duty in which the soul took part with fervent zeal. I fulfilled this duty as it was given to me to complete it, and having arisen, I left my chamber, and the recollection that it was a day blessed by

⁴⁶ See the foreword to *Elftal van brieven van wijlend den heere James Hervey, ter verdediging van zijnen Theron en Aspasio tegen de (hier voorgegaande) aanmerkingen van den heere John Wesley* (Rotterdam 1777).

⁴⁷ J. Hervey, *Theron en Aspasio of reeks van godvrugtige gesprekken en brieven* (4 vols; Amsterdam 1758) 321.

⁴⁸ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 52. The extract dates from 29 October 1780.

God began to grow within me, and my heart felt moved to sigh for the life-giving grace of the spirit of Christ our Lord.

Not until his grandchildren appear in the report—the later readers of Marteilhe, Newton, Campe and De Perponcher—does it liven up a little, and we catch a glimpse of Abraham's *Beste opvoeding der jeugd* in practice:

I went into the kitchen, said good morning to the maidservants and encountered the two little ones who had been entrusted to my care, one of them most cheerful and good-humoured, the other crying and howling for no apparent reason except that he wanted to do so. Or rather, that he did not know what he was doing. My gentle greeting did not help, but a small reprimand restored him, whereupon the two of them contentedly went into the dining room.

Should there still be any doubt about the sincerity of Abraham's notes—it would be unthinkable that such a man would poke fun at Lavater's religious outpourings—then it is dispelled when he lovingly describes common prayer with his grandchildren:

What a deeply satisfying surprise for me. My two grandchildren came in, both calling out loudly, Grandfather, I have missed morning prayers, I have missed morning prayers, the younger wailing most bitterly and sobbing with grief. My heart was moved to tenderness, a devout feeling came over me. I took them both by the hand and exclaimed, Hoorah, my dear children, Grandfather shall pray for you. They knelt down, one on each side of a chair, with their hands folded and their eyes closed, and I—in between them—prayed to the Lord Jesus for them with faith in his promise, whereby I might remind them of God's goodness and commend them to His love.—oh delightful duty, oh sweet experience of God's presence to gladden my heart.—Contented joy filled the young children, four and five years old, and they shouted—take me to church, take me to church.

The criticism of Lavater and his translator lies hidden in the last passage, where the insignificance of the sinner who proposes, as opposed to God's greatness that disposes, is underscored once again:

The excellence of the Lord Jesus, and his fullness and sufficiency, attracted me more than all the World has and can offer—and therefore I counted all things but loss and mire beside the honour of knowing Christ my Lord.—and oh why is this privilege granted to me. The response or answer was, that God's free grace might be glorified through me, an accursed being worthy of nothing. ... I ate in moderation, and read Lavater's diary—but it gave me no pleasure.

Abraham's preferences and aversions have caused us to stray a bit from the initial subject of his grandchildren's reading matter. As it may have become

obvious by now, Abraham had an indirect influence on their reading habits through their father Pieter. The passages quoted also suggest that he left a direct mark on their experiential world, shown by the minor chastisement as well as by common prayer and church attendance. In the family archive there are many poems by Abraham in praise of his grandchildren, both hand-written and printed, that are full of wise lessons and advice. The motto above one of these poems is very revealing in this respect: 'Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers'.⁴⁹ Here is a poem from 1780 addressed to Abraham Jr who, for his eighth birthday, was given a children's Bible by his grandfather with the following inscription:

And would it excite your zeal
and your childish attention unseal
if I favoured you with a book
so here it is, then, kindly look
its Biblical scenes invite
and make your mind take flight.⁵⁰

Abraham finishes the dedication to his grandson in less fluent meter, but with this significant text:

thus this book will grow with you as you age,
where your own name is printed on the very first page.

In other words, Abraham is giving his namesake a work from his own publisher's list, probably H. Graauwhart's two-part *Christelijke bedenkingen en leerzame zinnebeelden op 's menschen staten, beroepen, en genegenheden, als mede op de dieren, planten enz. met schriftuurlijke uitbreidingen en versjes* (Christian reflections on and instructive symbols of mankind's states, vocations and inclinations, as well as of the animals, plants, etc., with Biblical explanations and verses), one of Abraham Blussé's publications from 1765 which was to remain a standard on Blussé's list for quite some time. The book was warmly recommended by the reviewer of the *Algemeene Vaderlandsche Letteroefeningen* in 1765 for 'the less experienced', as a 'handbook', and 'very well suited for honouring the youth on special occasions in order to encourage them'.⁵¹ In Abraham's advertisement in *Boekzaal* from 1769, this last recommendation is repeated but is worded somewhat differently:

⁴⁹ *Lierzangen voor mijnen kleinzoonen Abraham, en Hendrik Blussé* (n.p., n.d. ca. 1789) (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 42).

⁵⁰ GAD, BFA, inv. 7.

⁵¹ AVLO 1765, 432.

'suitable to be given to the young as prizes'.⁵² We see the same text again with a minor variation in 1778 when the book is advertised once again, as if it were a new edition, as a 'most suitable present for young people'. This advertisement appeared in the *Rotterdamsche Courant* on 12 November, not coincidentally just a few weeks before the festival of St Nicholas. The richly-illustrated book with its 175 pictures could also be given as a birthday gift.

Apart from some crying and screaming, the children themselves have not had anything to say up to now. Due to a lack of sources, however, it is difficult to piece together what the Blussé children thought of their reading matter, or to what extent it moulded their personalities. Unsurprisingly, when the children grew older they did not restrict themselves to an un-critical 'take me to church, take me to church'. The views expressed by Abraham Jr in a letter from his student days are illustrative of this change:

I much prefer to consider things *tanquam ex tertis loco as much as possible*, only then is one able to absorb new information and to reach unprejudiced conclusions. ... Whoever said that this world should become a paradise once again? Where did that idea originate? Is it based on a few prophetic utterances in the O. T., do we understand them correctly? Are they not in fact simply comforting thoughts with which the prophets of the Jews, who loved their people and their motherland, consoled and cheered themselves, and which they sang of as poets and expressed as beautifully as they could? Did they look any further than their nation and their motherland? and has history not taught that even in that narrow sense they were no more than *pia vota*?—so that the notion of better times, of a golden age to come, is a false hope if it is based on such grounds. Do we have any other reason to believe in it? Let us examine carefully what has given rise to this belief. Is it not something that we recited from our catechisms, before we understood what we were saying? By the time the words began to mean something to us, these things had become axioms. Everybody repeated them to us, parents, teachers; and no one doubted them. And every minister would reaffirm them whenever he preached a sermon; who has not heard a prayer in church in which the minister did not yearn for a speedy arrival of the age when the wolf will lie down with the lamb, when no one will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, etc. Let us consider whether we have just cause to be strengthened by such a hope. Does the history teach us that man has progressed in knowledge and virtue, and does this make us hope in further gradual progress?⁵³

⁵² *Boekzaal*, September 1769.

⁵³ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 45, 21 February 1794.



38. Silhouette of Abraham Blussé Jr (1772-1850) of 1785. Museum Mr. Simon van Gijn Dordrecht.

There is as yet no trace of this sceptical attitude in the first piece that Abraham Jr published at the age of thirteen. This was a letter to the editor of a children's magazine called *Geschenk voor de jeugd* (A gift for youngsters) to which the family subscribed.⁵⁴

Ironically enough, this was a periodical whose editor was Ahasverus van den Berg, an old acquaintance of Abraham's grandfather who had taken a very different religious path.⁵⁵ He grew up in Dordrecht and was for many years an active member of the Concordia et Labore society, of which Abraham Blussé Sr was also a member. He was a great admirer of Lavater as well and translated much of his work into Dutch; according to Buijnsters he was an 'indefatigable, but, sadly, abominable translator of Gellert and Lavater'.⁵⁶ He may also have been responsible for the anonymous translation of *Mijn geheim dagboek*, which Abraham Blussé (who may have recognised the work of his old poet friend) so strongly criticised. This did not keep Van den Berg from taking 'great pleasure' in introducing Blussé's grandson in his magazine 'for the benefit and satisfaction of our young readers and with thanks to our young correspondent, whom we hope will make good progress on the path of virtue and industriousness'.

⁵⁴ *Geschenk voor de jeugd* (Amsterdam 1783) III, no. 10, 180-84.

⁵⁵ The other editor was J.F. Martinet.

⁵⁶ Buijnsters, *Hiëronymus van Alphen*, 86.

Abraham's unusual letter to the editor—no comparable contributions were found from other young readers in that year of publication—consists of two 'examples of virtue and diligence' observed among his acquaintances. The first worthy model concerned the noble deed performed by Jacob Blom, printer's apprentice at Gosse's in The Hague. When his father died in 1752, still owing thirty-five guilders to Hendrik Noot, Jacob decided not to rest until he had paid off his father's debt. After twenty years of hard work and frugality, which was necessary to amass such a sum, he learned that Hendrik Noot's widow (Abraham's great-aunt who had played Cupid for Pieter during his engagement period) had died. On hearing this, Jacob decided not to keep the money himself but instead to search for the remaining beneficiaries. Eventually he managed to track down the administrator of the estate, Abraham Blussé Sr, to whom he sent a letter offering the return of the monies. Abraham, 'astounded at the man's honesty, all the more excellent in a man of his social standing', regrettably had to accept the money because among the beneficiaries there 'were also children who had not reached the age of majority'. Both the original letter, which has been kept in the Blussé family archive, and the explanation written by Abraham Jr have withstood the test of time: 'these letters concern the models of virtue and diligence I wrote about in the tenth number of the *geschenk voor de jeugd*'.⁵⁷

The second patriotic monument that Abraham erected was for Jacob van Hespel, who had worked for the thread-spinning firm of Vernimmen in Dordrecht for sixty-eight years. Upon his death, the company's owner decided to hold up this exceptionally motivated employee as a worthy model 'by having him buried at her expense and with great dignity':

The coffin was placed upon a hearse, adorned with appropriate shields, and preceded by other labourers as pall-bearers, and followed by the relatives of the deceased and other residents, in such large numbers that this civilian funeral has been regarded as one of the grandest that the people here can recall.

As if this were not enough, a memorial plaque for Jacob was installed in one of the work rooms of the thread-spinning company bearing his portrait, personalia, mention of his long-standing loyalty to the firm (sixty-eight years) and a poem, possibly from the hand of Abraham Blussé Sr, which ends as follows:

⁵⁷ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 23. The letter from Jacob Blom to Abraham Blussé Sr dates to 19 May 1785.

Secured through fire and steel a hero's acclamation,
 By humble, wholesome work has Jacob won our praise.
 Already bent with age, yet filled with dedication,
 Grave sickness cut him down and numbered all his days.
 His spinning thread is stilled and death has made its claim
 Yet his loyalty lives on and keeps alive his name.

This initiative on the part of Abraham Jr comes across as a variation on two publications his father produced at that time that turned the spotlight on 'national' heroes: *Vaderlandsche maatschappij ter aanmoediging en belooning der Nederlandsche heldendeugd* (National society for the encouragement and reward of Dutch heroism) in 1781, which urged that medals be awarded to soldiers who had shown their bravery in the war against the English, and *Lauwerbladen voor de zonen van de Vrijheid* (Laurel wreaths for the sons of freedom) in 1782, which paid tribute to prominent patriotic leaders with portraits and laudatory poems. Pieter Blussé's strong attachment to exemplary behaviour can also be seen in his initiative of 1795 to honour a fellow Dordrecht resident named Rodenburg. The generosity of this Dordrecht manufacturer, who agreed to accept an administrative office but not the financial remuneration that went with it, led Pieter to suggest to the town's council that this deed 'be given all the publicity that is in our power to extend'.⁵⁸ He felt that it was unjust that the good deeds of great men were automatically publicised, whereas local, more everyday acts of heroism were consigned to oblivion: 'not one of you, however, would wish to dispute the fact that in every possible respect, good examples exercise the most useful influence upon a free country'.⁵⁹ His children must have imbibed these views from a very early age.

An Excellent Establishment: Educational Institutions

The Blussés were part of the upper middle-class when Abraham and Adolph were growing up. In these circles, a university education (should the family have the means to finance it at all) would only be possible for one of the children, usually the oldest son, the preferred subject being theology. While Abraham Jr was fulfilling his grandfather's fervent wish by studying theology in Leiden, the younger sons—Hendrik, Adolph, Pieter, Jan Jacob, Adriaan Gijsbert and François Frederik—were given more practical training. Hendrik became a wine merchant, Adolph a printer and

⁵⁸ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 51, speech by Pieter Blussé, 14 March 1795. See chapter 3.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

newspaper publisher, and Pieter a bookseller. Jan Jacob became a notary, Adriaan Gijsbert chose to earn his living as a grain merchant, and François Frederik became a banker. With the exception of Jan Jacob, they all went to the Dordrecht Latin school from the age of eleven or twelve,⁶⁰ but only Abraham finished the programme there and went on to study in Leiden. The others combined a few years of Latin school with practical training in modern languages and arithmetic, as did more than half their fellow pupils in Dordrecht⁶¹ and Pieter Blussé himself in his youth. The alternative schooling that Adolph followed is a good example of the meticulous way in which Pieter organised the educational schemes for each of his children, sparing neither the expense nor the trouble.

When Adolph entered the Latin school at the age of eleven he already had a few years of French school behind him. After two years of Latin school he changed to another type of programme and spent two more years at a boarding school in Krefeld, Germany, which was run by a Mr Schehl. At this institution, which Pieter Blussé enthusiastically describes in a letter to De Gijselaar as being 'quite respectable',⁶² lessons were taught in German, Latin, French, Italian and English.⁶³ The students also received religious instruction, of course, as well as philosophy, natural history, mathematics, geography, arithmetic, calligraphy, Italian bookkeeping—both single-entry and double-entry—and commercial correspondence. Optional classes were offered in Greek, logic and classical literature. During breaks and free periods, pupils could avail themselves of the services of the dancing teacher, fencing master, music teacher or drawing teacher.⁶⁴ Compared with the subjects offered at the average Latin or French school of the period, this institution was indeed as excellent as Pieter claimed. If we can believe the prospectus, then a great deal of effort went into personal formation in addition to the lessons. This formation was regarded as at least as important as the acquisition of knowledge: 'We are convinced that the education of the heart is more essential to man's happiness than the education of the intellect'.⁶⁵ Just as Otto van Eck was obliged to keep a diary

⁶⁰ GAD, Archief van de curatoren van de Latijnse school (Archive of the governors of the Latin school), inv. 94.

⁶¹ Esseboom, *Onderwysinghe der jeugd*, 380.

⁶² ARA, File 3.20.21, inv. 20, 12 November 1793.

⁶³ *Plan détaillé de l'institut d'éducation établi à Crévelt l'an 1783* (Cleves 1789) (ex. KB 553 H 35) 5.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 5-12.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 7. 'Nous sommes persuadés, que la culture du coeur est plus essentielle au bonheur de l'homme que celle de l'esprit'.

to develop his conscience—the ‘little man within’⁶⁶—so Adolph was subjected to an educational regime designed to cultivate a virtuous heart:

In addition, one of our main concerns is to inculcate virtuous ideas into the hearts of our pupils, to inspire in them a love of religion and work, a sense of decency, order and moderation; in other words to make them useful members of the society in which God has seen fit to place them.⁶⁷

Programmes were designed to fit the individual child, since the reading of diaries would have been too time-consuming. After observation of the pupils, an individual, tailor-made approach was chosen for each one in which gentle paternal pressure, the rewarding of positive behaviour and setting a good example were preferred far above other measures:

We are blessed, thanks be to God, that the majority of our pupils at the moment are well-behaved, & we are never in a position where we need to use anything but gentle persuasion.⁶⁸

Negative behaviour was discouraged by withholding amusements, confining children to their rooms, withholding pocket-money and keeping a register of transgressions that could be shown to the parents if they requested it. Positive behaviour was rewarded with:

our affection, privileges if the occasion arises, more varied amusements; favourable reports which we send to their parents, etc.⁶⁹

Although far less elaborate than the philanthropic educational institutions, the approach of the Krefeld school was inspired by them in many respects. The prospectus makes no mention of a well thought-out system of rewards and punishments like that of the philanthropists, who used such instruments as tables of merit.⁷⁰ Neither did the Krefeld school show any interest in basing the learning process on sensory observations, a method regarded as crucial by the philanthropic educators. They did attach a great deal of importance at Krefeld to physical exercise and outdoor activities. On Sat-

⁶⁶ Baggerman, ‘Lezen tot de laatste snik’, 60-67.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 7-8. *Aussi, un des nos soins principaux est-il de faire naître des sentiments vertueux dans le coeur de nos élèves, de leur inspirer l’amour de la religion & du travail, l’esprit de décence, d’ordre & de modération; en un mot à les rendre utiles à la société où dieu les a placés.*

⁶⁸ Ibid., 8. *Nous avons, grâce à Dieu, le bonheur, que la plus grande partie de nos élèves actuels se portent au bien, & ne se mettent jamais dans le cas qu’on doive employer avec eux d’autre moïens que la douceur.*

⁶⁹ Ibid., 9. *Notre affection, des prérogatives dans les occasions qui s’offrent, pour varier leurs plaisirs; des rapports favorables que nous envoions à leurs parens & c.*

⁷⁰ Lenders, *De burger en de volksschool*, 139.

urdays and Sundays the pupils were taken on healthy walks, preferably to nearby farms.⁷¹

Adolph was clearly not one of the pupils who might have forced the institution to abandon its benign approach. From the proud letter Adolph received from his father in 1792, it appears that the '*registre des paresseux*' (register of lazy pupils) did not contain any unpleasant surprises for Pieter:

Otherwise I am very satisfied with you, my son! Especially following the good report which Mr Schehl ... has given me concerning your conduct and diligence, so that you have already been promoted and have now been transferred from the Latin group into Modern German; that is killing two birds with one stone, as we say, and should be very profitable to you.⁷²

The great satisfaction that Pieter Blussé experienced when he or one of his children succeeded in 'killing two birds with one stone'—an expression he regularly employed—is typical of his pragmatic nature. This is reflected in his eclectic approach to structuring his children's education, which made it possible for them to pick and choose from the many types of education then on offer: a couple of years at the French school for the necessary basics, two years of the four-year course at the 'old-fashioned' Latin school to become acquainted with the classics, and another two years at a progressive boarding school where lessons in modern languages, personal formation and other basic commercial skills formed the core syllabus.

This constant changing of schools had the added advantage of giving the children the opportunity to build up a broad network of contacts with people their own age. This would have been beneficial to any child, but it served as a perfect basis for children destined to enter the book trade: Abraham Jr, who became a clergyman as well as a publisher, journalist and translator; Adolph, who emerged as a journalist, printer and publisher; and the bookseller-publisher Pieter Jr. In his letter to Heinemeyer in 1800, Pieter Sr stressed how important it was for an aspiring bookseller to acquire the broadest possible education. Adolph's training in several languages and his 'successful progress in geography and history' gave 'his father high hopes for that bookshop of his'.⁷³

His brother Pieter Jr, seven years younger and destined to succeed his father, probably did not attend the institution run by Schehl but another boarding school of a similar type. This is implied in the same letter, written

⁷¹ *Plan détaillé de l'institut ... à Crévelt*, 10.

⁷² GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 29, 18 December 1792.

⁷³ UBL, Ltk 1001, P. Blussé to D.U. Heinemeyer, 12 May 1800.

the year Pieter Jr turned fourteen, where his father speaks of it in the past tense: 'the then flourishing institution run by Professor Schehl in Créfeld'. It may have been past its prime, or even closed, when Jan Jacob was growing up, just like the French boarding school run by the 'pious Timmerman'⁷⁴ in Woudrichem, where Pieter Sr himself and a few of his children were taught before going to the Latin school. Whatever the exact details, the fact is that the future notary attended a boarding school in Dalem from his tenth to his eleventh year. Little is known about his time there from his letters to his parents other than that on a certain day the high water level 'kept us from amusing ourselves with paper boats', and that on another occasion he was in good health and eating 'cherries every day'.⁷⁵ His sister Sophie, five years his junior, felt less healthy during her time at a French boarding school in Delft, or she may have been feigning ill health when she begged her brother Jan Jacob to allow her to return home. Her request was firmly rejected:

Dear sister! We have received your sweet letter of the 4th of April and happily learned from it that you are still in good health. ... As for the illness of Mistress Evans's niece, father and mother are not unduly disturbed by this since you have already had both smallpox and measles and Mistress Evans takes all possible precautions, and especially since the holidays are fast approaching and it would not be worth the trouble for you to come back. In the meantime, we wish most sincerely that you may be spared this illness and that in about five or six weeks we shall once more embrace you in love and good health.⁷⁶

From these and a number of other letters in the family archive it emerges that Pieter Blussé attached great importance not only to the upbringing and education of his sons but also to that of his daughters. Even though there were four French girls' schools in Dordrecht in around 1800,⁷⁷ he chose for Sophia the more expensive option of a boarding school outside the city. The school run by the Misses Evans in Delft was not just a haphazard choice. He may have decided on this French school because Maria Evans and her sister had an English background, which would have ensured the quality of the English lessons as well.⁷⁸ In making such a choice Pieter

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 1, 27 June 1798; *ibid.*, box 45, 4 March 1799.

⁷⁶ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 6, 6 April 1808.

⁷⁷ Esseboom, *Onderwysinghe der jeught*, 303. For the curricula at these schools see *ibid.*, 316-17.

⁷⁸ On 18 July 1791 Maria J. Evans was given permission by the Delft town council 'to set up a school here'. She had moved from Rotterdam to Delft a month earlier and was granted

Blussé was far ahead of his time. Until well into the nineteenth century, English instruction in the Dutch Republic was not very popular, even among the elite.⁷⁹

Language Skills

In the Blussé family, mastery of English was considered as important as mastery of French. In the weekly schedule that Abraham was set at the age of twelve, Tuesday afternoon was reserved for translation into Dutch of English conversion stories. Adolph was expected to improve his command of English by attending the English church once a week, in addition to the two weekly sessions he spent preparing for his English lessons.

This emphasis on English must have been partly related to professional prospects of the Blussé children's, who were destined for commercial careers. The publishing house of A. Blussé & Son put many translations from English on the market,⁸⁰ so being able to judge the quality of the original manuscript or book would have come in very handy. The company also maintained ties with a London firm of booksellers, one of the customers for their English-Dutch dictionaries.⁸¹ Another inducement may have been their close contact with the Holtrop family, who probably provided the impulse for the joint publication of a number of authoritative English textbooks and dictionaries. And finally, the Blussé family's religious beliefs—'orthodox Calvinists' mixed with Methodist elements—may also have stimulated their interest in the English language. The fact that Pieter Blussé Sr had heard many sermons in the English church is found in a letter he wrote in English to his eldest son Abraham, who was studying theology in

an act of indemnity from the Scottish community in Rotterdam (GA Delft, Stadsarchief I, inv. 389 and inv. 1887). She may have been related to Edward Evans, who wrote one of the first English textbooks to appear in the Republic in 1757 with the title *English grammar in a new complete English and Dutch grammar* (G. Scheurweghs, 'English grammars in Dutch grammars in English in the Netherlands before 1800', *English studies* 41 [June 1960] 3). Otto van Eck's sisters also attended this boarding school, as we see in a diary entry made by Otto on 24 November 1794.

⁷⁹ No more than twenty-four English textbooks were published in the Netherlands during the entire eighteenth century, a number that grew to at least 695 in the nineteenth century (P.L.M. Loonen, 'Onderwijs Engels in Nederland en Duitsland. Een historische vergelijking 1650-1900', *Meesterwerk. Berichten van het Peeter Heynsgenootschap* [January 1996] 22-30, 23-24).

⁸⁰ In the period 1770-1807 that was four percent of the production (twenty-six volumes). In the period 1806-1830 it rose to nine percent (fifty-two volumes).

⁸¹ See Abraham Blussé Jr's ledgers (GAD, BFA, inv.14). This is a reference to the London firm of Ogle & Co, to whom they sold goods amounting to 74 guilders and 15 stivers in 1817.

Leiden at the time.⁸² Unlike the English in the inscription by which Willem Holtrop honoured Abraham,⁸³ Pieter's letter is riddled with mistakes, with the exception of the salutation—'My dear son'—and the last line: 'The good God, our father, will save and bless you in every way and all manner'.

The letter offers a unique insight into Pieter's command of the English language, which he must have acquired in conversation lessons in Amsterdam and in his career as a bookseller:

My dear son! I am are utmost satisfied with the proofs of your application. The destinations are very pretty and you will make in that art good progresses so wel as in your writing. The whole family was joyfull by the view of *the zoute bolletjens*; she loves your attention and good heart; she wished to recompense it; tell us therefore what you could do any pleasure. Your brother and sister are reestablished—we all profit now of the best welfaring. We wished that you are to so happy. Make my compliments to Mr. de Graaff and tell him that as soon as I am are able to answer him, I will not retard ... The best intentioned father, P. Blussé.

The fact that Pieter, with his 'am are', does not seem to know how to conjugate 'to be' cannot be blamed on the quality of his lessons. Evidently he did not spend enough time studying his lists of verbs. Many of the other mistakes he makes—the tendency to anglicise Dutch sentence structure—can indeed be ascribed to way English was taught at the time, when little emphasis was placed on syntax. English was mainly acquired with the help of vocabulary lists, set expressions and standard sentences—a method that was also applied in the textbooks by Holtrop and Marin, which Blussé published.⁸⁴ Unfortunately, the extent of his children's mastery of English is unknown. Adolph's appointment as a sworn translator of French, German and English for the Dordrecht municipal council in 1811 gives some indication of his level.⁸⁵ English was probably easier for Pieter's other children, too, since their education had been much more comprehensive.

We are left in no doubt as to their command of French. Adriaan Gijsbert was appointed *traducteur juré* (sworn translator) in the French language in 1812,⁸⁶ and his oldest brother Abraham Jr must have spoken the language

⁸² GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 45, 18 November 1803.

⁸³ See chapter 4.

⁸⁴ Thanks to Frans Wilhelm, who was extremely helpful in analysing Pieter's letter almost word for word and who allowed me to use his insights. Frans Wilhelm is preparing a dissertation on the teaching of English in the Netherlands in the nineteenth century.

⁸⁵ GAD, BFA, inv. 26, 14 January 1811.

⁸⁶ This can be seen in several deeds drawn up by the notary Cornelis van der Werff in the year 1812 which he translated (GAD, Oud notarieel archief [Old notarial archive], C. van der Werff, et al., 9 March 1812).

fluently to have risen to the position of editor-in-chief of the quality French newspaper the *Gazette de Leyde* in 1798, which had an international readership.⁸⁷ Abraham was so confident about his own knowledge of languages that he was critical of other people's efforts. This is evident in a letter to his brother Adolph written in 1811, when he had temporarily replaced him as editor-in-chief of the *Dordrechtsche Courant*. When Abraham was called away on urgent business in Leiden, he entreated his brother to return as quickly as possible on the following grounds:

I am more and more convinced with each passing day that what is needed here is a dedicated man who can supervise everything as well as an all-round man for various other jobs, especially someone who does not make serious mistakes in French, such as saying *j'ai parlé avec lui*, instead of *je lui ai parlé*, or *j'ai dit contre lui*, instead of *je lui ai dit*, and so forth.⁸⁸

This was Abraham's indirect criticism of the linguistic competence of Adolph's other stand-in, Pieter van Beest, best friend and contemporary of Pieter Blussé Sr.⁸⁹ Judging from one of Abraham's letters to a friend written in 1794 he was not always so skilled in French.⁹⁰ In this period he was still determined to become a minister of the Walloon church but was struggling with the French language:

You will surely approve my choice. A more reasonable amount of freedom, both in and outside the pulpit; more opportunity to study out of pure plea-

⁸⁷ See the rest of the chapter.

⁸⁸ GAD, BFA, inv. 29, 25 April 1811.

⁸⁹ One of the sources for this is a letter from Abraham Blussé Jr to Adolph dated 28 December 1809 in which he proposes that Adolph's 'future uncle P.v.B.' should take over the editorship of the newspaper temporarily. Adolph married Jacoba Holle, a niece of Pieter van Beest (GAD, BFA, inv. 29). That this suggestion was acted upon is clear from a letter from Pieter Blussé Sr dated 25 April 1810, who points out to Adolph that 'Uncle Van Beest ... is occupying his position with enthusiasm', and from the remark made by Adriaan Gijsbert to Adolph dated 25 April 1810, who reassured his brother in the following way: 'Mr van Beest has made a complete recovery and today has returned to writing in the newspaper, which once again is full of advertisements, and you will be pleased to see that your affairs are in no way deteriorating but rather are improving more and more.' (GAD, BFA, inv. 29). Pieter van Beest was not entirely lacking in editorial experience. The first *Dordrechtsche Courant* in 1784, the *Post van de Merwede*, modelled on the patriotic *Post van de Nederrijn*, was published under his editorship. This newspaper, however, only ran to two numbers (GAD, Stukken betreffende de redacteur van de Post van de Merwede, Pieter van Beest 1784-1785, arch. 325).

⁹⁰ The letter is addressed to Wenck, probably A.H.L. de Wenck, in 1806 master of the Amsterdam La Charité Masonic lodge, whose presiding master at the time was Willem Holtrop (A.J.A.M., *Johannes Kinker als voorvechter van de Verlichting, in de vrijmetselarij en andere Nederlandse genootschappen, 1790-1845* II [2 vols; Deventer 1988] 64).

sure, even while working, as this is lighter; mixing with other people, learning about them and from them, and enjoying their company; these, after all, are matters of no mean significance. They have entirely won me over, and make me regard the efforts I had to expend in order to master the French language as minor indeed. Surely you must have suspected that this is very hard work. And so it is, my dear friend. That is my experience, too, but there is nothing to be done about it, and *ardica quae pulchra*, I will speak frankly, the thought of preaching in the French language in a year after having known almost no French at all is deeply gratifying. And indeed, I am bold enough to hope that I will succeed, and that you will bear witness to it around Christmas time. I have lessons three times a week from an émigré, a very suitable and cultivated man, and I already have quite a good grasp of the pronunciation. ... I have now ignited a love for the French language in Brink.⁹¹ He is taking lessons from the same man, and the two of us (Brink and I) read almost all of Racine's tragedies during the Christmas holiday. We would meet at eight o'clock in the evening and seldom part before two in the morning.⁹²

At that point he was planning to follow up his studies in Leiden with some time abroad in order to perfect his French. According to a letter written by his father to Cornelis de Gijselaar, Abraham is said to have expressed this wish:

remain in Leiden for the full six years and then to spend one more year in Lausanne or Geneva so that he might cut a reasonably good figure in the French church—even though this will not make the bills any smaller, I have agreed to his plan because I am so glad to follow my children's inclinations, as long as there is no harm in them.⁹³

Mapping Out Careers

Pieter was not exaggerating when he said that he was doing his best to honour and to stimulate his children's inclinations. This indicates that he was impassioned by the same ideal as his own father had been in his day. There was, however, one condition (and here, too, a parallel can be drawn with his own upbringing): that those inclinations had to correspond with the career path he had mapped out for them. The fact that Abraham Jr did not become a clergyman—after pursuing an expensive course of study in Leiden where his interests ran in all directions, from classical languages to

⁹¹ 'Brink' is a reference to the future professor in Harderwijk and Groningen, Jan ten Brink (1771-1839), grandfather of the well-known nineteenth-century author Jan ten Brink.

⁹² GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 45, 21 February 1794.

⁹³ ARA, PA De Gijselaar, inv. 20, 12 November 1793.

history, philosophy and even law—did not disturb his father.⁹⁴ After all, it was not Pieter's fondest wish to see his oldest son in the pulpit, but that of his father, Abraham Sr.⁹⁵ In 1795, when Abraham Jr returned from Leiden, backtracking on his earlier decision, and disclosed his journalistic aspirations to his father, Pieter saw his opportunity. In 1796 he took over the printing office and the *Dordrechtsche Courant* from the firm De Leeuw & Krap and appointed Abraham editor-in-chief. He describes what in his view was a happy turn of events in a letter to his friend De Gijselaar, and not without a sense of triumph:

What a coincidence, my friend! You wanted my oldest son to have another vocation, and now this happens. Before the Revolution a newspaper was started here, the *Dordsche Courant*, and afterwards it was resumed and continued by De Leeuw & Krap.... I have now taken over that daily paper, print shop and all, and the ordinand is to become its editor. New cares and difficulties for me, also tedious in many ways, but nothing comes without hard work and thought—if this results in a livelihood, and with a modicum of hope it will, then my son is firmly situated and certainly better than if he had stayed with the church—alas!—from all appearances.⁹⁶

With this last remark, Pieter is alluding to the financial insecurity that had arisen for ministers of the state church after the First National Assembly had instituted the separation of church and state in 1796. By purchasing the firm of Krap & De Leeuw, Pieter was—once again—managing to 'kill two birds with one stone'. While Abraham was able to exchange his financially insecure future as a clergyman for a career as editor-in-chief, Adolph also found himself neatly settled into a good position. At the age of eighteen he was put in charge of the printing office. But in a complete departure from the plan, Adolph was given the responsibility of editing the *Dordrechtsche Courant* as well less than one year later. When Pieter took over Krap & De Leeuw in 1797, he could not have anticipated that Abraham would be given the chance to exchange the job of editor-in-chief of the *Dordrechtsche Courant* for the same position with the *Gazette de Leyde* in 1798. This Leiden newspaper was more prestigious than the Dordrecht publication and enjoyed international fame, with a distribution network that stretched from Philadelphia to Vienna, Syria and as far away as India. Its readership

⁹⁴ L.J.F. Janssen, 'Levensberigt van Abraham Blussé', *Handelingen der Maatschappij van Nederlandsche letterkunde* (1850-1851) 3-16, 3-5.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ ARA, PA De Gijselaar, inv. 20, 21 March 1797.

included such high-profile politicians and intellectuals as Thomas Jefferson, Horace Walpole, Isabelle de Charrière and Marie-Jean Concorde.⁹⁷

The vacancy arose as a result of a radical coup in January 1798. The new government suppressed the publication of the *Gazette de Leyde* because it kept to the middle ground and was even accused of favouring the aristocracy. The editor-in-chief and joint owner of the newspaper, Jean Luzac, was given the task of finding a successor who would be acceptable to the radicals and whom he could live with as well.⁹⁸ When in the spring of 1798 he happened to hear a sermon preached by Abraham Blussé Jr, who was serving as a guest ordinand of the Walloon community in Leiden, he saw a way out of this dilemma. As one of Luzac's former students and an ardent supporter of his ideas, and at the same time a member of an unimpeachable Patriot family, Abraham struck him as an ideal candidate.⁹⁹ Luzac offered him the position of editor-in-chief in exchange for a share of the profits and what was in those days an ample annual allowance of two thousand guilders. After discussing it with his father, Abraham accepted.¹⁰⁰ On 13 May 1798 the first number of the *Nouvelles politiques publiées à Leyde* appeared under Abraham Blussé's editorship. This left the path clear for Adolph Blussé to take up the position of editor-in-chief of the *Dordrechtse Courant*.

Until 1804 Adolph ran both sides of the family business—the newspaper and the printing office—although his father remained owner. Then in 1804, when Adolph reached his majority at age twenty-five, the firm passed into his hands. To avoid internal competition, a contract was drawn up stating the mutual obligations of the printing office, the newspaper and the booksellers.¹⁰¹ Adolph was not allowed to accept any small print jobs from private individuals other than work for his father's bookshop. He was also to provide him with six free copies of the *Dordrechtse Courant*. His father was to reciprocate by giving him the full profits from all the advertisements he received from colleagues or private persons. The agreement ends with the stipulation that Adolph:

⁹⁷ J.D. Popkin, *News and politics in the age of revolution. Jean Luzac's Gazette de Leyde* (Ithaca/London 1989) 120–36.

⁹⁸ Janssen, 'Levensberigt van Abraham Blussé', 5–8.

⁹⁹ In 1792 Abraham was one of three students to defend a critical philological argumentation by Luzac—*Observationes in Euripidis maxime Hippolytum* (*Levensberigt*, 4).

¹⁰⁰ The contract is dated 20 August 1798 (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 42).

¹⁰¹ The contract for this is dated 19 March 1804 and is to be found in BFA, inv. 29.

shall not establish any book or stationery shop, or assist in establishing one, nor knowingly do anything which might harm or hinder my father's book and stationery shop.¹⁰²

This contract anticipates a takeover of the bookselling business by any of his brothers, in which case that brother would also be held to the competition clause. The brother, for his part, would not be allowed 'to set up or help establish any book printers, nor to have any part therein directly or indirectly'. He would also be forbidden to publish a newspaper or to grant favours to any competing newspaper, let alone to participate in that newspaper's publication. The agreement goes so far as to stipulate that any such initiative should be opposed 'with all the means in his power'. Finally, Pieter's successor was obliged to contract out all his printing work to Adolph's printing office, who for his part must promise to 'deal with [the brother in question] as speedily, properly and respectfully as possible, if necessary letting others wait their turn to be served'. The name of the brother tipped to be Pieter's successor was not mentioned in the contract, although it had been an open and shut case for many years as can be seen in Pieter's letter to Heinemeyer from 1800:

and then my namesake Pieter, now fourteen years old; and if I have anything to say about it, my wishes would be fulfilled if I were to see this lad succeed me in our good name and firm.¹⁰³

Pieter had more than just a say in the matter; he held the deciding vote. Seven years later it was indeed Pieter Jr who followed in his father's footsteps and took charge of the bookselling branch of A. Blussé & Son.¹⁰⁴ Not long afterwards, Pieter Sr's wishes were more than fulfilled when Pieter Jr married Clara Maria van Braam on 29 June 1807. She was the sole surviving child of Pieter's biggest local competitor, Pieter van Braam.

It was only natural that this union, whether romantically inspired or not, stirred the writers of occasional poetry in the Van Braam and Blussé circles to pull out all the stops.¹⁰⁵ The gist is summarised most concisely

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ UBL, Ltk 1001, P. Blussé to D.U. Heinemeyer, dated 12 May 1800.

¹⁰⁴ The year of the takeover has been determined on the basis of one of the answers given by Pieter Blussé Jr in a survey taken in 1811 on the state of the book trade in the Northern Netherlands. When asked how long it had been since he had taken over his father's bookselling business, he answered 'four years' (B.P.M. Dongelmans, *Van Alkmaar tot Zwindrecht. Alfabet van boekverkopers, drukkers en uitgevers in Noord-Nederland 1801-1850* [Amsterdam 1988] 99).

¹⁰⁵ The marriage verses quoted are all to be found in: BFA, unsorted, box 23.



39. Portrait miniature of Pieter Blussé Jr (1786-1869). Private collection.

by a Mr Kimyzer, who gets straight to the point in his opening sentence: 'Multiplying goods with goods. Sanctified in God's own blood'. This merging of 'The art and commerce of Koster' moved even Pieter Blussé Sr to compose a few lines:

Though never gazed on by Poetry's charming Art,
Nor favoured with a ray from any Muse,
Yet clumsily the feelings of my heart will strike a note;
The gladness of my soul will cause me to speak:
Yes, I will speak of the good fortune that has blessed me.

The marriage verse written by J.H. Hoeufft, a literary friend of Pieter van Braam, expresses the more mixed feelings that Van Braam must have felt. After having lost his wife and a number of his children in a very short space of time, Van Braam was left with nothing than to stand by and watch his publishing house being subsumed by his former competitor:

And in the end, your house, once cloaked in cypress mourning,
Is crowned with myrtle's green, and grief transformed to joy.

In his poem, Pieter van Braam also made specific mention of the sad circumstances which had led to the merger:

And now, my dearest Bud, the only one remaining,
 My last devoted child, as good as she is true,
 Is stretching out her hand, her future fate attaining,
 And does the same for me, as I bid life adieu;
 Ah, precious, tell me now, what is my Father's role?...
 What's left for me but prayer, and silent, brooding days!
 But the words he addressed to Abraham Sr proved he was a good loser:
 And now, GREY-HEADED FRIEND, who so much has endured,
 And weeps with grateful joy at the boon your house is given,
 Long may you live to see, as your songs of thanks spring forth,
 The signs of blessed grace that smile on you from heaven.

In 1818, after the death of Pieter van Braam, the firms of A. Blussé & Son and Pieter van Braam were finally combined to become the publishing and bookselling firm of Blussé & Van Braam.¹⁰⁶

Finding suitable employment for Abraham Jr, Adolph and Pieter Jr was only a small part of Pieter Sr's task. Pieter and Sophia had eleven children in all. Ten of them reached adulthood and seven of them were sons. When Pieter stood down from the municipal council in 1795, the excuse he gave showed a solid sense of reality: 'What would an honest heart gain from dissembling? The burden of a large household is the one and only impediment'.¹⁰⁷ Especially when we know that those burdens consisted in part of setting up a broad spectrum of firms—some not related to the book trade—with a view to securing his children's future. It was in this period that he and his friend Pieter van Beest began selling wines—a company known as Van Beest & Blussé—of which his son Hendrik became a business partner in 1796.¹⁰⁸ When this 'good and unwavering young man' died an early death at the age of twenty-five, his father sent out a deeply emotional death announcement—'I have no other consolation than the hope that he will share in the Resurrection of the Righteous. I am obliged to give notice of this loss, which is grievous both to me and my kin. May you long remain spared from such sorrowful circumstances!'¹⁰⁹—but apart from the cost of the mourning paper his death created a mass of paperwork. Judging from letters, bills and writs sent to defaulters that were scattered through-

¹⁰⁶ From that year onwards the publishing house carried the imprint Blussé & Van Braam. The printing business run by P. van Braam was purchased during this period for a sum of 2,310 guilders (BFA, unsorted, Ledger 1811-1818 [unnumbered]).

¹⁰⁷ The letter is dated 9 March 1795 (BFA, unsorted, box 51).

¹⁰⁸ He remarks on this in his letter to Heinemeyer (UBL, Ltk 1001, 12 May 1800). A ledger from this wine merchant has been preserved dating back to around 1800 (BFA, unsorted, box 60: Alphabet of outstanding debts owed to Van Beest and Blussé).

¹⁰⁹ The condolence letter is dated 8 January 1802 (BFA, unsorted, box 59).



40. Portrait miniature of Jan Jacob Blussé (1788-1879). Private collection.

out the family archive, Pieter Sr must have spent years winding up the wine merchant's business.¹¹⁰ Whether Pieter also set up the grain merchant's business run by his son Adriaan Gijsbert is unclear. The archive contains only a ledger written in his hand registering the receipts and expenditure on a consignment of flax. This may have been a branch of Adriaan's grain and pigeon feed business.¹¹¹

It was with another son in mind, Jan Jacob, that Pieter bought the seigneury of Oud-Alblas. As a junior notary, Jan Jacob was charged with purchasing this seigneury by his father, and later Pieter promoted him for the position of bailiff.¹¹² Jan Jacob had chosen his profession at a young age.

¹¹⁰ Pieter Blussé brought a case against Hendricus Schull, a wine merchant from Zaltbommel, that dragged on for years, in an attempt to recoup the still outstanding debt of 3,950 guilders and 80 stivers owed to the firm of Van Beest & Blussé (BFA, unsorted, box 2, Extract uit het sententieboek van het buitengerigt der stad Nijmegen, 9 July 1810. See also box 3 with respect to an outstanding bill from J. van der Zande and box 51, 'Lijst van debiteuren van de wijnnegotie', dated 31 December 1810 with a total sum of 53,915 guilders, 8 stivers and 4 cents in outstanding bills owed by debtors).

¹¹¹ BFA, unsorted, box 59.

¹¹² See chapter 3.

When he was twelve years old his father had given him a manual for notaries that contained the following inscription:

For my beloved son Jan Jacob, who should stamp into his memory these principles of notarial practice; in order that he may continue his exercises with ease and understanding and in this way, with time, grow into a skilled and experienced legal scribe, as is the heartfelt wish of his most loving father.¹¹³

Only one son was left who still needed gainful employment: Pieter's youngest and eleventh child, François Frederik. This son went to work at a branch of the firm A. Blussé & Son. He became a banker, and in 1817, like his grandfather and father before him, was appointed to the position of 'official licensed collector' for the Royal Netherlands Lottery.¹¹⁴

Pieter Blussé Sr emerged as a jack-of-all-trades, as the introduction described him. Apart from holding political and ecclesiastical office, he was a bookseller and publisher and he ran a post office. For a short time he was also forced by necessity to serve as a wine merchant and a flax merchant. In addition to this he became a seigneurial lord, with all the bother this entailed: organising selection procedures for teachers and clergymen, meddling in poor relief and administering justice in the lower courts. He also acted as a small-scale banker and from 1803 onwards as a licensed collector for the Generality Lottery, which later became the State Lottery.¹¹⁵

His one frivolity as a businessman seems to have been that apart from selling lottery tickets he also bought some for himself. Pieter tried his luck occasionally but was not a serious gambler. Although barely a shred of paper has been saved from his bookselling business, the family archive does contain a whole series of his current-account books, in particular those covering the period 1811-23, in which his banking affairs are carefully recorded. From this we learn that he dealt in stocks, bonds and annuities,

¹¹³ BFA, unsorted, box 59, 31 August 1801.

¹¹⁴ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 8 contains the appointment dated 25 October 1817. He did not take it over from his father straightaway but was assigned to the lottery office as his assistant with the promise to follow his father's guidelines.

¹¹⁵ See previous note. The fact that selling books and lottery tickets was a good combination can also be seen in the reminiscences of W.P. van Stockum concerning his apprenticeship to the Amsterdam bookseller's P. den Hengst & Son, 'The folios and quartos of the Church fathers and the classics were all neatly arranged in the shop cabinets according to custom, while the sales area was separated from the front part of the shop by sliding glass doors. The office was partitioned on the left-hand side, where matters concerning the lottery were dealt with, since my patron, along with Mr Engelberts, was collector for the Royal Netherlands Lottery' (S.E. Veldhuijzen, ed., 'Memoires van W.P. van Stockum sr.', *Jaarboek Die Haghe* [1988] 167-213, 178).

with the Amsterdam firm of Lamaison & Brouwer acting as brokers, in addition to which he rented out property and lent some of his capital at interest to private individuals.¹¹⁶ The picture that emerges from these account books is that of a man who was the prototype of the defensive investor. With the exception of his own children and clergyman, he only financed people who could provide solid security: bills of exchange or mortgages. He may also have supplied people with unsecured loans, as moneychangers did. Those kinds of investments were more of a gamble but much more lucrative because higher rates of interest could be charged. He could not have foreseen that in 1810 Napoleon would introduce *tiërcering* in the Netherlands, by which interest was reduced to one third its value. Pieter owned more than 100,000 guilders in state securities at the time.¹¹⁷

He probably did not turn to banking until around 1803, after his sons had become partners in the firm of A. Blussé & Son. That is certainly true of the lottery that he took over that year from his father Abraham Blussé at a payment of 'one full lottery ticket for all Classes, and with five hundred guilders at the end of every draw'.¹¹⁸ In the autumn of 1821, two years before Pieter died, the lottery was passed on to his son François Frederik, who had already been a member of the firm for a few years. The lottery seems to have served both Abraham Sr and Pieter Sr as a provision for their old age, a reasonably safe and constant source of income which they could draw on once they had retired from the publishing and bookselling business. In addition to this they both had a nest egg in the form of several 'evergreen' titles on their publishers' list that remained in their name. These provided them with an income year in year out, until sales of a particular title fell off.¹¹⁹ From Abraham Jr's account book it emerges that these titles could be used as an 'emergency fund' for the children in the event of a calamity. From 1807, when Louis Bonaparte purchased the *Gazette de Leyde* with a view to its becoming a royal mouthpiece, until 1815, when Abraham was appointed school inspector, this oldest son of Pieter did not have a regular

¹¹⁶ The current-account books are to be found in GAD, BFA, unsorted, boxes 7, 59 and 60.

¹¹⁷ Pieter Blussé's current-account book from 1812-1813 contains a list of his stocks at the back. Most of them consist of 'domestic stocks' for a total of 121,020 guilders (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 59). For *tiërcering*, see H.T. Colenbrander, *De patriottentijd, hoofdzakelijk naar buitenlandse bescheiden 1897-1899* (3 vols; The Hague) I, 87; H.T. Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken der algemeene geschiedenis van Nederland van 1795 tot 1840* (22 vols; The Hague 1905-22) I, 669.

¹¹⁸ BFA, unsorted, box 3.

¹¹⁹ See chapter 6.

source of income.¹²⁰ He lived off royal compensation amounting to 1,000 guilders a year and supplemented it with translation and correction work for the firm of A. Blussé & Son, with new publications for which he was responsible, and from the income from a few older titles in which he shared the profits with his father.¹²¹ This income varied from 300 guilders to 5,000 guilders a year. Abraham began sharing this savings with his father in 1809, a year after which he had been so hard up that he was forced to note in his account book, 'took 200 guilders from each of the two money boxes of our children, at interest'.¹²²

Structure of the Firm

By now it will have become clear that starting in 1797, when the third generation took its seat on the board in the person of Adolph, the firm of A. Blussé & Son (its name still unchanged) had come to represent a tangle of collaborative ventures in ever-changing configurations. In the ledger of the composing room¹²³ we find separate entries for all these different Blussé combinations: Abraham Blussé 'the elder' for the titles in which he operated on his own; P. Blussé—later P. Blussé van Oud-Alblas—as a separate entry but also as an associate of the company with the Amsterdam firms of De Groot and Warnars, as an associate of the company with W. Holtrop and an associate in the firm of A. Blussé & Son (in which Adolph and Pieter Jr also participated); a separate entry for Abraham Blussé Jr; another for the company of Pieter Blussé and Abraham Blussé the younger and, from 1804 to 1807, for P. Blussé the younger separately, later under the heading of A. Blussé & Son; from 1810 'the partnership with Abr. Blussé the younger and P. Blussé the younger' and 'the partnership of Adolph Blussé and Pieter Blussé the younger'. After this the ledger finally comes to rest in 1818 and all transactions are accommodated under the firm name of Blussé & Van Braam.

¹²⁰ See, among others, Janssen, 'Levensberigt van Abraham Blussé', esp. 8-9.

¹²¹ Including a number of French Bibles he had taken over, Staring's *Bijbels woordenboek*, Calvin's catechism, Meyer's *Woordenschat* and the French-Dutch *Dictionnaire portatif* by Marin, taken over from his grandfather in 1804. Abraham's income from this period has been calculated based on his ledgers (maintained and preserved from 1799 to 1852) (GAD, BFA, inv. 14).

¹²² *Ibid.* He noted this on 11 March 1808.

¹²³ As mentioned in an earlier note, these ledgers are unnumbered; they have not even been admitted to the unlisted collection. They were found only a few years ago and are still waiting to be inventoried.

Since all the Blussés, even those working in other lines of business, made use of this firm's services, a number of sidelines are also reflected in these ledgers. All of them had their calling cards printed there. Abraham Sr, later Pieter Sr and later still Pieter and his son François are listed for the typesetting of their lottery tickets. One of the jobs Jan Jacob brought to the family firm was the printing of the terms of auction for his public sales. Hendrik is to be found in the books for the typesetting of a number of 'letters concerning the wine business'.¹²⁴ Pieter Blussé Jr showed what was up his sleeve by walking into the printer's shop on 7 June 1806 and requesting them to print twenty posters with the provocative text 'This shop is selling out'. Thanks to this visit we are able to pinpoint the exact moment when the book shop passed from father to son. Naturally, Pieter Jr had to have new calling cards printed. Contained in the archives are not only the date they were printed but also the cards themselves.¹²⁵ Of all the Blussé calling cards, Pieter Jr's is the liveliest: it features the silhouette of a galloping horseman.


The Blussés were not the only people of Dordrecht who beat down the door of Adolph's printery. The composing room ledger lists publishers from Dordrecht and the surrounding area as well as Dordrecht residents who came with their commercial and private printing needs. Even greater is the flood of customers listed in the ledger of the *Dordrechtsche Courant*.¹²⁶ The section covering 1802-09 contains the names of 290 debtors, including 25 larger booksellers operating on a national scale, 23 postmasters who distributed the newspaper, and a great number of advertisers and subscribers who picked up their newspaper directly from the printer's.¹²⁷ Presumably, some of them would have first dropped in at Pieter Blussé's bookshop—initially run by Pieter Sr and later by Pieter Jr. Indeed, the bookshop functioned as a halfway stop for the printery—as Adolph's deed of conveyance and other sources attest. No matter what you did in Dordrecht—whether

¹²⁴ 12 June 1802.

¹²⁵ In GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 55, among others. His new set of 100 calling cards was typeset on 10 January 1807.

¹²⁶ GAD, Archive of the Dordrecht printing and publishing company, inv. 26.

¹²⁷ In this period the *Dordrechtsche Courant* was distributed to: Breda, Gouda, Haarlem, Heusden, Vlissingen, Leiden, Klundert, Zalt-Bommel, Deventer, Amsterdam, Goes, The Hague, Utrecht, Tholen, Nijmegen, Ouddorp, Schoonhoven, Delft, Geertruidenberg, Schiedam, Maassluis, Antwerp, Steenberg, 's-Gravendeel, Zierikzee, Zwijndrecht, Alphen aan de Rijn, Arnhem, Woerden, Zuidland, Bergen op Zoom, Zevenbergen, Hoorn, Den Bosch, Voorburg, Terheiden, Tilburg, Gorichem and Rotterdam.



PUBLICQUE VERKOOPING
V A N
B E E S T E N,
T E ~~RANDENKVAAR~~ *Rijs-cort.*
Op Woensdag den 22 October 1806

CENT NIEMANSVERDRIET en CORNELIS SALIE,
kooplieden in Beesten/ zyn dag meeninge/ ten overstaan van
Schout en Schepenen van ~~Randenvaar~~ *Rijs-cort.* te Verkoopen:

40 VAARE KOEYEN.
10 KALF-KOEYEN. *terecht gekalft hebben of nog*
10 VAARSEN met KALF. *in pelen kalven*
10 HOKKELINGEN.
10 kalven

Wie gadinge hebben om dezelve te kooppen/ komen
op *Woensdag den 22 October 1806 'smorgens*
Negen uren voor 't Stigthuis te Rijs-cort.
ZEGT HET VOORT.

Te Dordrecht, by A. BLUSSÉ en ZOON, Boekverkoopers op de Voorstraat, over
de Buis, in Laurens Koster.

41. Announcement printed by A. Blussé & Son of a public auction of cows and calves at Rijsoort in 1806. Dordrecht Municipal Archives.

it was purchasing stocks and bonds or books, Zutphen stomach elixir, wine, grain, pigeon feed, flax or lottery tickets, renting houses, sending parcels, or looking for notarial advice or a sworn translator—there was a good chance that, with luck, you would soon cross paths with someone from the Blissé family, and often with several at the same time.

When the bookseller G. Marsman could not pay his debts to Pieter Blussé Jr, for example, both Jan Jacob and Adolph were sent to investigate. Jan Jacob assigned Adolph the task of demanding payment of the debts and informing the bookseller that ‘our brother wishes to terminate all deal-



42. Detail of a painting made by the Dordrecht artist Abraham van Strij in 1825. Hanging behind him is a similar announcement of a cattle sale with the imprint Blussé & Van Braam. Private collection.

ings with this man because of his impromptitude'.¹²⁸ And when Colonel Van den Bergh failed to pay his lottery debts to Pieter Sr, Jan Jacob went to him personally to read him the riot act: 'Mr P. Blussé, the official lottery collector of this city, has spoken to me concerning a claim served to you amounting to seventy-two guilders'. The colonel is urgently advised to avoid any 'unpleasantness' by paying off his debt within fourteen days.¹²⁹

Asking Father's Permission

The far-reaching involvement of all the family members in one another's lives and business affairs is movingly illustrated by three letters that François Frederik, Pieter Jr and Adolph wrote to their parents in 1818, who at

¹²⁸ GAD, BFA, inv. 29, letter dated 4 May 1810.

¹²⁹ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 51, letter dated 25 August 1815.



43. Undated painting of the printer and newspaper publisher Adolph Blussé (1779-1846), oil on panel. Museum Mr. Simon van Gijn Dordrecht.



44. Painting made in 1833 by G.A. Schmidt of the book dealer Pieter Blussé Jr (1786-1869), oil on panel. Private collection.

the time were staying with the bookseller J. Oomkens in Groningen. The letters were found folded up together in brotherly fellowship in the family archive.¹³⁰ François is telling his father, and not without pride, about the vicissitudes of his lottery venture:

Little of note has taken place since your departure, and this includes the lottery; of the thirty-five prizes drawn, the highest amounted to 100 guilders; besides this there were three tickets from Amst[erdam] and three from The Hague at 20 guilders; shall I send these to you or save them until you return? As Adolph has written to you, I received the tickets from Amst[erdam] at 81 guilders and 10 stivers; and those from The Hague at 81 guilders, and I sold them, with the 9/16 still remaining, to Pieter de Visser. Since De Visser wanted to have one more ticket, I sent for three more from Polak and received 80 guilders and 10 stivers. I have heard nothing more about the affair with Keyzer. I am also diligently continuing with the second class shipment and will do my best to put this in order. ... You will observe, my dear parents, that nothing demands your speedy return, so you may travel in the greatest comfort, and make long, full use of the delightful weather we are having.¹³¹

¹³⁰ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 4.

¹³¹ Ibid., letter dated 21 July 1818.

Pieter Jr's reports were also cheerful. The previous Saturday he had been out riding with his family and Adolph's:

Made a whole procession through Old Beyerland, at the head was little Adolf with Keetje, followed by Noatje with Pieter Adolfzoon, Pieter Pieterzoon with Jetje, Adolf with Claer, Piet with Coot, and Sophie. We enjoyed the day immensely because of the splendid weather.¹³²

After this he switches over smoothly from idyllic family scenes in a sun-drenched polder landscape to his bookselling affairs:

The fine weather will also be most welcome to your good selves. Although it is exceedingly warm here, the business is doing reasonably well. Today I received a statement concerning the purchase made for us in Amsterdam, which has been handled very well, it seems to me. I do not doubt that the enclosed invoice will be a welcome sight, I shall do my best to take care of everything, and write to Leiden.

Not only was the Amsterdam company in which Abraham Jr and Pieter Blussé Sr participated doing well, but so was the firm of A. Blussé & Son:

P.S. just received a letter from Rotterdam for thirteen large and twenty-six small Dictionaries.

Adolph also refers to the family outing in his letter, but his priority is with the business side of family relations. The time is ripe 'to ask father's permission regarding the printing of Janson', an English-Dutch pocket dictionary revised by R. van der Pijl. Right in the middle of the printing process Adolph realised to his dismay that he had not come to a clear agreement with his father as to whether the different parts should have separate headings:

On Saturday evening the typesetter asked me whether, as in the case of the model, we were to make a separate heading for each part. Since I had received no instruction to do otherwise, I said 'yes' and immediately had them fetch and set the title used by Van der Pijl, and enclose a proof, besides the original title, for your approval.¹³³

In the earlier edition there had been room to advertise Holtrop's English dictionary, while in this revised edition the last sheet consists of 'filled pages'. There are strips left over, however, to print spine titles, 'for example, thus: Janson's pocket dictionary [sic]. In two parts'. He asked his father to decide 'on various things' and to 'please let me know as soon as possible whether you approve of all this'.

¹³² Ibid., letter dated July 1818.

¹³³ Ibid., letter dated 13 July 1818.

Two weeks later, Pieter Blussé Sr and Sophia appeared to have moved lodgings to the house belonging to the Zwolle bookseller F. Clement. The weather had broken after an impressive thunderstorm, the wigmaker had suddenly died and François informed his father that 'nothing very exciting is happening with the lottery'.¹³⁴ This did not stop him from giving a long account of a subject that, for the uninitiated, is difficult to follow: the retailers' great need for 1/2, 2/4, 4/4, 4/8 and 4/16 lottery tickets:

To keep everyone supplied I have twice ordered a threesome of lottery tickets from The Hague, and in the past week 80 1/2; even so, I have now had to order another 8 1. At the last time of writing the tickets had risen by 1 guilder and they continued to rise. So if it should happen that on your way to Zwolle, Utrecht or elsewhere you are able to buy a whole or even half a dozen lottery tickets at reasonable prices, that would be good, for we could easily make use of them.

In his letter François also did the honours for his brother Pieter Jr. He reported to his father that 'yesterday ... three stacks of the *Abrégé* [were] returned to us from Amsterdam'. This is a reference to Van der Pijl's *Abrégé de l'histoire ancienne, tiré des ouvrages de Rollin, Barthélemy, Millot, Vertot, et d'autres*, a title published by Blussé & Van Braam in August 1818 in a run of 1,100 copies.

There were more advantages to placing his sons in the various branches of the business than just the spreading of risk.¹³⁵ A striking example is the purchase of the Oud-Albas seignury discussed earlier. Adolph printed the terms of auction and composed the advertisement. Jan Jacob organised the sale. And finally Pieter Blussé Sr bought the seignury. Few Dordrecht families would have been so quickly and thoroughly informed on such a wide range of local and national affairs as this one was. A number of tangible examples can be found in the Blussé family archive, such as a sheaf of draft versions of Pieter's request for a coat of arms for his seignury. This request is folded into a *Dordrechtsche Courant* with the message that 'every town, village, seignury ... which until now has not had its own coat of arms but desires in future to bear such' should apply 'with utmost speed' to the

¹³⁴ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 6, letter dated 28 July 1818.

¹³⁵ Compare Dekker, *Childhood*, 106, who observes, based on the analysis of a number of egodocuments from this period, that fathers had the authority to steer the careers of their sons so as 'to best serve the family interests'. Spreading the risk by distributing the children over different branches of trade and industry would seem to have been a sensible option.

High Council of the Nobility.¹³⁶ After the introduction of the Napoleonic Code—the civil code—in 1810, the Blussés will have been much less inconvenienced than most of their contemporaries. P. Uittenboogaard, later a Dordrecht office clerk, wrote in his autobiography of the great consternation it aroused among ‘private individuals who, although they were fairly conversant with the old procedures, were utterly perplexed by the new-style regulations’. The bailiffs at the courts were said to have profited from the confusion and set themselves up as impromptu advisors.¹³⁷

A certain Sjaquet was appointed bailiff for our law court, a Flemish Frenchman who understood Dutch but spoke it very haltingly, and who took great pride in his knowledge of the law. We once overheard him saying: ‘I take ze code [the Napoleonic Code] in ’and and give ze advice to ze farmer’.¹³⁸

The Blussés were not dependent on the advice of someone like Sjaquet. As printers and publishers of statute books, extracts from them and notes explaining them, they belonged to the group that profited commercially from these changes.¹³⁹ Even if the Blussés had read only a fraction of the titles on their own list, such as *Formulierboek voor burgers van alle klassen in huwelijkszaken, geboorte- en sterfgevallen* (Book of forms for citizens of all classes concerning matters of birth, marriage and death), J.B. Konijnenburg’s *Ontledend en beredeneerd register der onderwerpen, vervat in het wetboek der registratie* (Analysis and annotated register of subjects contained in the registry code) or A. Blussé’s *Wetten en decreten betreffende het*

¹³⁶ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 9.

¹³⁷ GAD, HS 2227 (original) and 3107 (transcription), P. Uittenboogaard, ‘Herinneringen uit mijne jeugd’ (written in 1884), p. 19 of the transcription.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Examples of publications by A. Blussé & Son in this field in 1810–1811: *Wetboek van de registratie, het zegel, de regten der griffie en van de hypotheeken*; A.G. Daubenton, *Nieuw praktikaal handboek voor vrederegters*; De Bue, *Algemeen toltarif der vereenigde regten*; *Algemeen handboek der Fransche wetten*; *Keizerlijk decreet van 18 juny 1811*; *Formulierboek voor burgers van alle klassen in huwelijkszaken, geboorte- en sterfgevallen*; J.G. Dulauren, *Handboek der contribuabelen*; *Keizerlijk decreet, behelzende een algemeen reglement voor de organisatie der departementen van Holland, voor 1811*; J.B. Loret, *Grondbeginselen van de wetenschap der notarissen*; J.M. Dufour, *Crimineel wetboek ... aanduidende het verschil en verband van het crimineel wetboek, met de vorige en oude wetten*; M. Pigeau, *Inleiding tot de burgerlijke regstpleging*; P. Lepage, *Vraagstukken over het wetboek van burgerlijke regtsvordering, waarin de zwarigheden in de praktijk voorkomende worden opgehelderd*; A. Bruggeman, *Zaakelijk en naauwkeurig uittreksel uit de generale instructie op de conscriptie*; P.J.B.C. van der Aa, *Handboek voor deskundigen, of gids in burgerlijke zaken*; J.B. Konijnenburg, *Ontledend en beredeneerd register der onderwerpen, vervat in het wetboek der registratie*; A. Blussé, *Wetten en decreten betreffende het openbaar onderwijs, met den Franschen tekst ten dienste der Hollanders*.

openbaar onderwijs, met den Franschen tekst ten dienste der Hollanders (Laws and decrees concerning public education, containing the French text for the benefit of the Dutch), all they really needed to know was that Abraham Blussé Jr, translator and compiler of a number of these handbooks, was on top of things.

To what extent the printing industry in the eighteenth century was impelled by a 'readers' revolution' among the members of the 'rising middle classes' is a subject still being debated. The Blussés may or may not have made their fellow citizens more articulate, but as their family archive shows, they themselves at least had achieved a high level of self-reliance with the help of their own products. Preparing for the publication of *Zaake-lijk en naauwkeurig uittreksel uit de generale instructie op de conscriptie* (A practical and precise extract from the general instructions governing conscription), for example, published by Blussé in 1812—in which the ins and outs of the universal military conscription introduced by Napoleon are discussed—would certainly have been useful to the family. It was during this period that Pieter Sr's sons were called up. They managed to slip through the net, however, by hiring substitutes, a practice that was perfectly legal. Not everyone was able to pull it off, however, as another Dordrecht resident of the time testifies: 'Difficult stipulations ... together with ignorance of the laws on *remplaçeren* led to bitter disappointment'.¹⁴⁰ Only the second youngest of the Blussé sons ended up having to fulfil his own military obligation: Adriaan Gijsbert, 'grain merchant', as his calling card stated. The discovery of this card in the archive boxes, along with a number of other papers that trace the full progress of this son, was held up in the introduction as an example of 'emblemata' that tempt the researcher away from the main path. Now that a few pieces of the puzzle have fallen into place, however, it appears that his fortunes are actually quite important. Through Adriaan's story we can better ascertain the social rank and status of his father, Pieter Blussé Sr, during the Napoleonic period. Indirectly it also gives us a clue as to the success of the publishing house.

¹⁴⁰ A. van Altena, *De Hollander onder de Fransche cohorten, of mijne lotgevallen als conscrit* (Dordrecht, Blussé & Van Braam 1827) 3.

Yet Another Offshoot: Adriaan's Fortunes

If there is anything that increases the proper feelings of a right-minded young couple and kindles their fortitude, then it is surely the begetting of children! My children know how often that happiness has been mine, and with what elated spirits I wrote to my friends on one of the more recent occasions, 'The fruitful vine on the wall of my house has once more presented me with a fresh offshoot'.¹⁴¹

When at the age eighty Pieter included this passage in his autobiographical sketch, he probably had the original text in front of him. The excerpt is quoted verbatim from the birth announcement of Adriaan Gijsbert, the Blussé family secret.¹⁴² Apart from this announcement there is little more to be learned about this son other than a few paltry signs of life scattered over several boxes in the family archive: a calling card, a circular dated 1810 in which Adriaan proudly announces the establishment of his own grain trading business, a couple of encouraging letters to his brothers from the same period—'if one takes time to enjoy oneself, one returns to one's business with satisfaction'—and then a bill from a lunatic asylum in which his physical needs and pattern of consumption are brutally recorded:

Until 8 May 1823
 Three months' laundering and sewing: 9 guilders
 Use of the Bed and linens: 7 guilders
 Coffee and tea, 4 stivers per day: 18 guilders and 4 stivers
 6 ½ bottles of red wine at 18 stivers: 5 guilders and 17 stivers
 Various minor expenses: 8 guilders and 13 stivers
 Three months' daily board that will appear on the bill dated 8 August 1823: 125 guilders
 Total: 174 guilders and 4 stivers.¹⁴³

Nevertheless it is possible to reconstruct the fortunes of Pieter Blussé's second youngest son. Something must have gone wrong in around 1813, after he had been called up to serve in Napoleon's legion of honour. After this there follows a long silence, interrupted only by solicitous letters from friends and relations inquiring after his condition, and finally in 1823 the bill from the asylum. In the sources predating 1813, Adriaan comes across

¹⁴¹ GAD, BFA, inv. 11 (autobiography of Pieter Blussé ca. 1822).

¹⁴² GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 49.

¹⁴³ The calling card and the circular (dated January 1810) are to be found in GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 1; the letters are both addressed to Adolph and can be found in GAD, BFA, inv. 29, 25 April 1810 and 3 May 1810; the bill for the asylum can be found in GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 5.

as a cheerful young man, still living with his parents, who acted as an intermediary in the absence of his father or brothers. In 1810, for instance, he sent word to his brother Adolph, the printer and editor-in-chief of the *Dordrechtsche Courant*, that he did not have to worry about the newspaper during his trip to Zeeland:

Mr van Beest has recovered completely and has written for the newspaper again today, which is full of fine advertisements, and you will be pleased to see that your affairs are not suffering but are flourishing more and more.¹⁴⁴

At the same time he reminds him not to forget to promote the commercial interests of his brother Pieter, the book dealer, in Zeeland: 'Piet asks you to remember his business affairs'. In the only other letter of Adriaan's that has been found, also addressed to Adolph, he again passes on a number of his brother Pieter's messages. In addition, he appears to have been given orders to send 'book wrappers'; he advises Adolph not to forget his father's business interests in Rozendaal and Oudenbosch; and he mentions a consignment of sugar for Mr van Beest which should be sent 'on the next available ship'.¹⁴⁵

In the correspondence among the brothers together he acts as a kind of broadcasting station: 'and pass on the enclosed to Br. Adrn.',¹⁴⁶ or as a messenger: 'rather than send this with the post of yesterday, it is now going with Adriaan and the sisters'.¹⁴⁷ At about twenty years of age Adriaan was not only a linchpin in the family business but was also clever enough to translate a German novel into Dutch. This novel was put on the market in 1811 by A. Blussé & Son under the title *Damian Hessel en zijne roofgezellen, of echte berichten van eenige gevaarlijke roverbenden, hunne taktiek, en hunne schuilplaatsen* (Daniel Hessel and his fellow highwaymen, or true stories about some dangerous gangs of bandits, their tactics and their hiding places). In early May 1810, when his brother Adolph joined a Dordrecht division of Napoleon's guard of honour, enthusiastically reporting it to his brothers and already offering to lend them his horse, there was no sign of difficulty. Abraham Jr's reaction was somewhat ironic as he expressed the hope 'that something more than a fine horse might come of this'.¹⁴⁸ Adriaan Gijsbert's response was far less reserved: 'We share your feelings of enthu-

¹⁴⁴ GAD, BFA, inv. 29, 25 April 1810.

¹⁴⁵ GAD, BFA, inv. 29, 3 May 1810.

¹⁴⁶ GAD, BFA, inv. 29, 13 May 1810, letter from Abraham Blussé Jr to Adolph.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 26 April 1811.

¹⁴⁸ GAD, BFA, inv. 29, 12 May 1810.



45. Sketch by A. Schouman of Napoleon's visit to Dordrecht on 5 October 1811. Dordrecht Municipal Archives.

siasm and hope that they will be increased by being able to see the great man himself up close'.¹⁴⁹ His chance came six months later. In the autumn of 1810 Napoleon was to make a stopover in Dordrecht on his way to Amsterdam; the plans were changed, however, in favour of his passing through Gorichem. The members of the Dordrecht garde d'honneur, which by then included all the Blussé brothers—Adriaan as well—decided to leave their town and welcome the emperor to Gorichem in their glittering uniforms.¹⁵⁰ It turned into a grand celebration:

At Vleugel's where we congregate,
And all our idle hours spend;
The beef they serve there is first rate;

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 3 May 1810.

¹⁵⁰ On the list of names of the members of this corps we find Adolph Blussé, Pieter Blussé Jr and Abraham Blussé as members of the cavalry, and Adriaan Gijsbert Blussé and Jan Jacob Blussé as members of the infantry (GAD, *Dordracum Illustratum* no. 2448).

Oh! That this time would never end.¹⁵¹

The only damper on the festivities was the news that Napoleon had decided at the last minute to travel by water after all and had chosen to dock in Dordrecht, of all places.¹⁵² But there were worse things in store. Soon after these events, Pieter Blussé's sons were called up to take part in a different kind of lottery than that from which their father and grandfather had profited, and with completely different stakes.

Russian Roulette

After Napoleon had managed to introduce compulsory military service even in the remote corners of his empire, the Blussés, like so many of their generation, were invited to participate in a mandatory lottery 'on account of the conscription' in which the stakes were their own lives. Whoever was thus drafted would very likely be given the opportunity to take part in Napoleon's Russian campaign, or in the German campaign a year later. The horrors of the Berezina River crossing still resonate in our historical consciousness. The battles in Germany, though far less well known to us today, were no less dramatic. Of the approximately 400,000 men who marched with Napoleon in his German campaign in 1813, only 60,000 made it back across the Rhine, and a great many of these later succumbed to typhoid fever.¹⁵³

In the end it was not the Blussés but their employees who went on the campaigns. The law regulating conscription, as can be read in the extract published by Blussé, made it possible for a person—in exchange for payment—to pass on his lottery number to someone else, who would then take upon himself the obligation to 'march for that person when his number was called up'.¹⁵⁴ This led to a lively trade in cannon fodder. Those who could afford it bought themselves a replacement, or to put it more accurately, 'sold' their 'lottery number' in a macabre Napoleonic tombola to poverty-stricken men from the lower classes who, in accepting the money, were trying to support themselves and their families, hoping all the time that the draw would turn out in their favour. Bookseller Pieter Blussé Jr's number was taken by one of his book shop assistants, the printer Adolph's

¹⁵¹ Uittenbogaard, 'Herinneringen', 28.

¹⁵² Van Dalen, *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht*, 1170-1171.

¹⁵³ W.F. Lichtenauer, *De Nederlanders in Napoleons garde d'honneur* (Rotterdam 1971) [= *Historische werken over Rotterdam* 9] 4-5.

¹⁵⁴ A. Bruggemans, *Zaaklijk en naauwkeurig uittreksel*, 64.

DE HOLLANDER
 ONDER DE
FRANSCH E COHORTEN,
 OF
 MIJNE LOTGEVALLEN ALS CONSCRIT.
 DOOR
ADRIANUS VAN ALTENA,
 GEWEZEN SERJANT-MAJOR BIJ DE 88^{STE} COHORTE.



*(O du arme mens! ... Goede God! ... Was ik dan al zóó dieruwaadig
 dat mij eene salmoes werd aangeboden!)*
 TE DORDRECHT,
 Bij BLUSSÉ EN VAN BRAAM.
 1827.

46. Adriaan van Altena survived the battlefield and recorded his experiences as a conscript in *De Hollander onder de Franse cohorten*, which was published in 1827 by Blussé & Van Braam. Dordrecht Municipal Archives.

number by a printer's apprentice,¹⁵⁵ and the grain merchant Adriaan Gijsbert's by a labourer whose widow was later provided for.¹⁵⁶

Not everyone was as fortunate as the Blussé brothers. Adriaan van Altena, later an author on the Blussé list, had his replacement rejected on two occasions:

I was called up. I expressed my desire to have someone else take my place. With this the prefect looked me up and down and ordered the replacement to undress. He was my first and cheapest substitute. He walked back and forth, completely naked, and then the prefect leaned his head back and studied him from the rear. 'No good,' he says. I ask him to tell me what was wrong with the man and he says, 'he's too skinny'.¹⁵⁷

Van Altena had probably failed to pay the necessary bribes. He was given one last chance, but his incursion into The Hague's poor quarters did not produce any new candidates:

Then, alas! although I spent the night scouring every hovel where such people might be found, I was unable to strike a reasonable bargain with anyone; the most exorbitant demands, and the desire to be paid straightaway

¹⁵⁵ GAD, BFA, inv. 26. This contract, dated 19 August 1813, gives us an idea of the position of printers' apprentices at the printing office of A. Blussé & Son. It stipulates that one of Adolph's apprentices, Pieter van Dongen Corneliszoon, will act as his replacement, and instead of receiving his usual piece-wages for this service he will be paid a guaranteed wage of 6 guilders a week. Compared with the standard quoted average daily wage of 1 guilder this is certainly not a fortune. Actually this compensation is to be paid before the draw has taken place. What the printer's apprentice is to be paid if Adolph's number is drawn—that is, if Pieter is called up as his replacement—is not clear from this contract. It does, however, contain a clause designed to prevent the replacement from wilfully failing the medical examination or from deserting: 'in the event that said Pieter van Dongen should be the cause of his being declared unfit after having been examined by the aforementioned conscription board or by any other competent body, or should he ... be found guilty of desertion or otherwise fail to attend to his duties, the same Pieter van Dongen ... will not only be required to pay the costs of a contract for a new term of duty but will also pay the full price entailed in finding a new replacement.'

¹⁵⁶ GAD, ONA, Notary van der Werff, 9 April 1812. This is a contract arranging for the replacement of Adriaan Gijsbert Blussé by Clement Sassenburg, a labourer from the village of Hendrik-Ido-Ambacht. The contract stipulates that Sassenburg will take Adriaan's lottery number regardless of the destination. For this service he will receive 50 guilders immediately, the same amount again spread over six weeks and 3 guilders a week. Should he be sent to the front, then after two years' and three months' 'consecutive completed term of duty' his wife will receive 1,600 guilders. Just like the contract between Adolph and his substitute, this contract also contains a clause to prevent the replacement from deserting. Two years later, the focus of the contract was no longer on Sassenburg and Adriaan Gijsbert but on Sassenburg's widow, the farmer's wife Cornelia Snoek, who was now remarried to Willem van der Kruyt, and on Pieter Blussé Sr who, on behalf of his son, paid the remaining sum due according to the contract agreed upon two years earlier (BFA, unsorted, box 52).

¹⁵⁷ A. van Altena, *De Hollander onder de Fransche cohorten*, 13.

before the medical examination, made me realise that all was trickery. And when they learned that they would have to set off immediately, without any eleged speeches, then all I received was ridicule and no help at all.¹⁵⁸

A Dubious Honour

In 1813 Adriaan Gijsbert could avoid his fate no longer. A careful selection had been made from the highest circles of unmarried young men '*sans état*' like Adriaan Gijsbert, who were compelled to join a garde d'honneur of quite a different feather than the Dordrecht guards of 1810.¹⁵⁹ And despite the optimistic hopes of his father, who was diligently searching for 'justifiable means to exempt him', this corps, unlike the ordinary military service, did not allow for replacements under any circumstances.¹⁶⁰ By 'justifiable means' Pieter would have been alluding to the various attempts at civil disobedience, usually unsuccessful, which parents and conscripts resorted to in an attempt to decline this honour. A suspiciously high number of young men—some of whom, fifty years later, were still fit enough to attend the golden commemorative festivities of 1863 at the Vreugd en Rust country estate—were suddenly prevented from leaving on account of poor health, nervous breakdowns, extreme short-sightedness or other physical or mental complaints.¹⁶¹ The proviso that only young men without an established social position would be eligible for the corps also led many parents and their lawyers to take up their pens in protest.¹⁶² This was the legal loophole that Pieter Blussé had been looking for. Abraham Jr wrote to his brother Jan Jacob about it after he and his father had given the matter serious consideration: 'seeing as the law stipulated young people *sans état*, we flattered ourselves that brother Adr[iaan], in his capacity as sworn translator for the Dordrecht Tribunal, would be exempt'. Pieter seems to have left it at that, unlike other fathers such as Gijsbert Karel van Hogendorp, Ock-er Gevaerts, B. Donker Curtius and H.R.W. van Goltstein, whose persistent

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 15.

¹⁵⁹ J.W.A. Naber, *Geschiedenis van Nederland tijdens de inlijving bij Frankrijk, juli 1810-november 1813* (Haarlem 1905) 207.

¹⁶⁰ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 4, letter from Abraham Blussé Jr to Jan Jacob Blussé dated 25 April 1813.

¹⁶¹ Including F.A. van Hall, A.W.L. Heldewier and Van Wijckersloot (Lichtenauer, *De Nederlanders*, 32-36). The commemorative festivities are discussed in *ibid.*, 296-99.

¹⁶² This was formulated by Napoleon as young men '*qui n'ont aucune profession*' (without a profession) (*Ibid.*, 39). Naber writes: 'People vainly made their appeals based on the letter of the Senate decision of 3 April 1813, which refers to young men who had no "état"—no established social position'. This wording was also used by Pieter Blussé Sr (see the following paragraphs) (Naber, *Geschiedenis van Nederland tijdens de inlijving*, 207).



47. Coloured print issued by the Amsterdam publisher E. Maaskamp of the uniforms worn by Dordrecht's guard of honour—cavalry, infantry and navy—when Napoleon visited Dordrecht in 1811. Dordrecht Municipal Archives.

opposition gave rise to violence and threats from the conscripting prefects or even imprisonment for the rebellious fathers.¹⁶³ Neither do we come across the name Adriaan Gijsbert Blussé in the chronicles of ‘resistance heroes’ of the period: conscientious objectors who could only be persuaded to join the guard of honour after having endured prison sentences or other sanctions. This sort of fervour did not suit father Blussé, who had every confidence that his children

would remain spirited and industrious, completely composed and prudent, and submissive, if necessary, and will continue to heed and follow the advice of their older brothers as well as that of Mr van Beest and Mr van Braam.¹⁶⁴

Despite all protests, at the end of May 1813 the first detachment of the *gardes d'honneur*, five hundred men in all, set off with great ceremony to the French garrison in the town of Metz. The outlook there, judging by reports from the Rotterdam factory owner's son Pieter van Vollenhoven, was initially far brighter than many of them had imagined it would be:

As we travelled, how I dreaded arriving in that terrible place, Metz! How I pictured myself being subjected to all the austerities, humiliations, difficulties and deprivations of wartime, and the obligations of military service ... but became of all this dreaded misery? What do you think? A life of merriment, gadding about and good entertainment!¹⁶⁵

After Napoleon's personal inspection of these untrained young men sank into utter chaos—‘and when the order “quick march” was given, we all began criss-crossing each other in every direction so that it was impossible to unravel the mess, no one caring whether we happened to sweep the emperor and all the staff along with us’¹⁶⁶—the emperor concluded that nothing could be done with such ‘oafs’.¹⁶⁷ He decided to line these troops up in reserve—clearly visible to the enemy so as to give the impression that he had a powerful cavalry on hand, but not in a position to do any harm or to get themselves wounded.¹⁶⁸ After the first day of the bloody battle of Leipzig, 16 October 1813, the soldiers returned from the front line

¹⁶³ Lichtenauer, *De Nederlanders*, 78–81. On the protest mounted by Ocker Gevaerts: *Ibid.*, 75, 83, 94.

¹⁶⁴ Abraham Blussé Jr cites this advice from his father in a letter to Jan Jacob Blussé (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 4, 25 April 1813).

¹⁶⁵ GAR, Coll. hss. I 1150.

¹⁶⁶ From the report by Paulus Cornelis de Bie, as cited in: Lichtenauer, *De Nederlanders*, 44.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

with only light hand wounds, probably self-inflicted.¹⁶⁹ It is therefore hardly surprising that not a single soldier from the entire regiment of the Dutch gardes d'honneur was killed in battle.¹⁷⁰

Compared with the fate of his stand-in for the regular army, the labourer from Hendrik-Ido-Ambacht who was probably placed in the frontlines and did not survive the battle, Adriaan Gijsbert's fate was definitely enviable—at least if there were a psychological law stating that another man's greater suffering could alleviate your own. But is there a benchmark for suffering? For historians sitting in the safety of their book-lined rooms it is indeed tempting to scoff at the hardships of these elite young men and their eventual collapse. On the way down to their garrison they were amazed at the filthiness of the Southern Netherlands—'the land is abysmal, the lodgings are dirty and the people are as stupid as apes'.¹⁷¹ Then, after the uprising in the Netherlands of December 1813, they found themselves hostages in French military prisons where dozens of men were kept in one cell with only a single bucket for a toilet.¹⁷² The fact that none of the gardes was cut down in the heat of battle does not mean there were no casualties among them. Their splendid uniforms, if they were able to hold on to them (some of the gardes, after having been robbed by Cossacks, had to continue the campaign naked or in rags¹⁷³), did not render them immune to typhus, the so-called 'army plague', that had broken out among the troops.¹⁷⁴ Taking part in 'the hell of Leipzig', a battle that left an estimated 80,000 dead and wounded, must have left its mark on many of them—even if witnessed from behind friendly lines.¹⁷⁵ This certainly held for Adriaan Gijsbert Blussé, who may have survived without physical injury but, according to reports after 1813, was reduced to a mental wreck and left to drift. After these events, all we are told about him is that in 1814 he was living at an address in Culemborg. No longer in his right mind, he ran away from his lodgings and started roaming the streets, only to be committed to an insane asylum (carefully chosen, but an asylum just the same) where he remained under lock and key for the rest of his life:

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 227.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 4.

¹⁷¹ From the travel report of a Rotterdam merchant's son, Jacob van Zwijndregt, as cited in Lichtenauer, *De Nederlanders*, 215.

¹⁷² Ibid., 257.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 240.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 248 ff.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 223–31.

Perhaps Their Excellencies have taken a decision concerning Adriaan's next residence. ... I have spoken with father about the house in Delft that Pietje discussed with Koos, and also a similar one in Koudekerk. But His Excellency, and this is no less true of mother, still has a great horror of such places. These are not institutions meant to restore people to normal health, as you seem to suppose, but rather places of custody.¹⁷⁶

The family eventually chose the mental institution in Koudekerk, where Adriaan Gijsbert remained until his death on 16 October 1834. In his letter of condolence, cousin A. Lens summarised the mixed feelings that his passing must have evoked among the members of his family: 'I was very moved to read this morning in the newspaper of the death of your brother in Koudekerk. Being released from a state that undoubtedly will be replaced by a better one is not to be regretted. But the memory of such a life will forever remain distressing.'¹⁷⁷ This may have been the reason why Adriaan Gijsbert's fortunes are not mentioned in Pieter's autobiographical sketch, nor in the rough notes that he had wanted to flesh out but failed to complete before his own sudden death in 1823. This brief outline of his life mainly mentions the achievements of Pieter and the other family members. The insanity of one of his offspring would have been considered an unwelcome addition, a blot on the family escutcheon. From a letter that Pieter wrote to his children in 1820, which was only to be opened after his death, it appears that he had not forgotten Adriaan after all. A large part of this letter concerns the future of his 'unhappy son Adriaan Gijsbert' whom he commends to the 'tenderest care of all his brothers & sisters' and for whose upkeep he has reserved the sum of 40,000 guilders in shares.¹⁷⁸ If Adriaan's life had taken a different turn he would certainly have been given a part to play in Pieter's autobiographical sketch. If later on, when it was all over, he had still been capable of relating his adventures—at the front, in captivity, in hospital or wherever else he had spent the autumn and winter of 1813—and if he could have spun those accounts into yarns to be retold around the table at the family's social gatherings, his memory would have lived on in the family mythology, as happened in so many other families that had a *garde d'honneur* in their ranks.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ GAD, BFA, inv. 29, 18 June 1816, letter from Abraham Jr to Adolph.

¹⁷⁷ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 12, 21 October 1834, the letter is addressed to Abraham Blussé Jr.

¹⁷⁸ GAD, BFA, inv. 7, 14 October 1820.

¹⁷⁹ Lichtenauer remarks that the written history of what in effect was a micro-episode has been manipulated by the fact that the upper classes had more efficient means of expression at their disposal and were better documented. This criticism could equally be applied

The Social Ascent of a Publisher's Family

Being called up to serve in the garde d'honneur, for which only the upper class was eligible, may have been a disagreeable affair, but—as the name suggests—it was not without honour. Only young men from eminent families were considered for the final selection of 500 gardes, which was done on the basis of tax records and the opinions of local experts. In Dordrecht the expert was the sub-prefect J. Repelaer, who had to work against the clock to finish off his list of candidates—he was kept from taking his few days' leave until the task was completed.¹⁸⁰ Figuring among the names of old prominent Dordrecht families such as the Repelaers and the Pompe van Meerdevoorts, and nouveau riche families like the Vriezendorps, were those of Adriaan and Jan Jacob Blussé.¹⁸¹ The latter was exempted, as is recounted in a letter written by his father, because of his function as a sworn notary.¹⁸²

The very fact that they were selected at all is a token of the Blussé family's rapid social ascent. The above-mentioned families were firmly entrenched members of the aristocracy when the Blussés were still thread-spinners and hired messengers. Back in the 1770s they were proud and grateful to be given the opportunity to provide candidates for the church consistory for the first time, and in the 1790s Cornelis de Gijselaar and Ocker Gevaerts referred to them as well-meaning people but ones 'who didn't know the lay of the land'. Twenty years later they were to find themselves in the company of the very same people, whose sons had also been conscripted to serve in the guard of honour: they were all in the same boat. The size of the fortune Pieter Blussé Sr left to his family when he departed this life in 1823 makes it clear that Repelaer had not made a mistake, despite the time constraints: 283,500 guilders was an unusually large fortune at the time.¹⁸³ It was a hundred thousand guilders more than the capital sum with which the prominent Dordrecht merchant Cornelis Vriezendorp gladdened

to the oral tradition: 'Often one hears stories told in families about a forefather who went to war long before 1813 as a volunteer or conscript in the Dutch garde d'honneur, but who could not possibly have belonged to that company.' (Lichtenauer, *De Nederlanders*, 6).

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁸¹ The list was drawn up on 17 October 1813 (ARA, Archives of the sub-prefecture Dordrecht [arch. 3.20.10.02] inv. 227).

¹⁸² GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 4, 25 April 1813.

¹⁸³ It took nine years to administer his estate. The definitive settlement of the estate of Pieter Blussé of Oud-Alblas took place on 5 April 1832 at the premises of notary Huibert Struijk and is to be found in GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 6.

the hearts of his offspring in 1835,¹⁸⁴ although less than the fortune of the Van Goltsteins, a family of Gelderland nobles who had been landowners for generations and whose name we came across earlier in connection with their resistance against the garde d'honneur. In 1829 their estate was estimated at almost half a million guilders, which put them at the very highest stratum of society.¹⁸⁵

On the basis of this it is tempting to surmise, or at least to suggest, that Pieter's publishing house was a great commercial success, and ergo that he had a very keen nose for business. And subsequently to jump to the conclusion that the reconstructed publisher's list (to be dealt with in the next chapter) is a good reflection of 'the' taste of 'the' eighteenth-century reading public.

This raises a number of complications quite apart from the question of which reading public A. Blussé & Son actually served. It is highly doubtful that Pieter became so rich from his bookshop and publishing house alone. The family archive contains two balance sheets, one from 1773 and one from 1803. From these it emerges that Pieter Blussé Sr had been able to double his net assets in the intervening years from 20,000 guilders to 40,000 guilders.¹⁸⁶ That was a respectable result, but it comes nowhere near the almost three hundred thousand guilders encountered in his legacy twenty years later. The income from his old list of titles and the titles that he published after 1803 in partnership with his son Abraham can be calculated from the figures recorded in a number of current-account books from the period 1810-1819. With his publishing he achieved annual sales of 5,027 guilders; ten percent of this went to Pieter Blussé Jr as distributor, leaving him with 4,524 guilders per annum. The other expenditures are more difficult to assess—printing costs, the acquisition of manuscripts, advertising, wages for correctors, authors' fees, etc.—and therefore have not been deducted from the total amount. If we reckon that his turnover in the period 1804 to 1810 was the same as in the later period, then we come up with a total of 72,384 guilders, from which a substantial sum would have still to be deducted for costs. When we add to this the 40,000 guilders he already had, the 1,500-guilder profit he made when he sold his bookshop and its

¹⁸⁴ The rich Dordrecht merchant Cornelis Vriesendorp died in 1835, leaving a fortune of 165,707 guilders (W.J. Akkersdijk, *Koopmanscultuur in Dordrecht in de eerste helft van de 19e eeuw* [unpublished dissertation Erasmus University, May 1989] 4).

¹⁸⁵ Dekker, *Childhood*, 50.

¹⁸⁶ His net estate in 1773 was 21,111 guilders and 12 stivers, and in 1803 it was 41,150 guilders (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 1).

contents to his son Pieter Jr, and the amount he received when he transferred his lists to his sons in 1819 – 23,967 guilders—we arrive at a grand total of 137,851 guilders. That is a little less than half the capital he left behind when he died.

The rest of the capital would appear to have been amassed from other sources not related to the publishing house and the bookshop. In 1808 he inherited 9,985 guilders from his father. After Pieter had the post office duties taken away from him in 1798, he received in compensation a sum of 150 guilders per annum. In addition to this, in 1823 he was owed 8,000 guilders in outstanding mortgage loans, from which he must have drawn interest, and, as mentioned earlier, he speculated in stocks and bonds on a modest scale. He also drew an income from his seignury which can be estimated at 500 guilders per annum based on a profit-and-loss account from 1812.¹⁸⁷ If this sum is representative, that would amount to a total profit of 7,014 guilders. Even if we add up all these sums, we still fall short of 283,500 guilders in assets; a rough calculation brings us to about 158,750 guilders, from which day-to-day living costs have not yet been deducted. What remains is a 'dark number' which, in my view, is only partly to be accounted for by rent from houses, interest on mortgages, and trade in stocks and bonds. It is most unlikely that a defensive investor like Pieter Blussé, who also had to deal with the financial blow caused by the *tiërcering*, would suddenly have become immensely rich from investments. The greater part of this dark number probably consisted of income from the lottery. Indeed, if we take another look at the 1803 balance sheet, there is no getting around the fact that Pieter made his great leap forward after that year—the very moment that he took over the lottery from his father: 21 January 1803.

From the little that is known about the Dutch State Lottery in those years—its history has yet to be written—it is clear that after 1800 the popularity of the lottery began to take off. The issuance of lottery tickets underwent a decline in the period 1795–1800 from 52,000 to 43,000 but picked up again and rose to 60,000 in 1810. This was partly due to a decision by King Louis Bonaparte to make the draws more frequent and to double the main prize from 100,000 to 200,000 guilders.¹⁸⁸ It is difficult to say to what

¹⁸⁷ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 9, Baten en lasten der heerlijkheid van Oud Alblas 1812.

¹⁸⁸ J.J.N. Smits, *De kans lacht yder toe. Een beschrijving van 250 jaar Staatsloterij aan de hand van gegevens van de oud-directeur der Staatsloterij P.R. van Alderwelt van Rosenburgh* (The Hague 1976) 31. In Fokke's review a few sections are devoted to the lottery from around 1800 (G.A. Fokke, *Geschiedenis der loterijen in de Nederlanden. Eene bijdrage tot de kennis*

extent Pieter Blussé profited from this; the collectors' incomes are still terra incognita.¹⁸⁹ In addition, Pieter Blussé played the lottery himself. We detect the first hints of this in his love letters, when he split one of his prizes and gave half to his sweetheart. Thus the possibility cannot be ruled out that at some point in his life he may have had one or more winning lottery tickets in his possession, perhaps after 1803. We read nothing of any such happy event in the piles of occasional poems preserved in the family archive, though the subject would have lent itself nicely to versification. Even Johannes Eusebius Voet,¹⁹⁰ an extremely devout pietistic Dordrecht poet and author of rhymed versions of the psalms, saw no objection to cheering enthusiastically for fellow townsman and mint master Otto Buck after he had won the hundred thousand in 1749:

Hold, honest Buck, your apron high,
As gold rains down from heaven's forge,
The great Peruvian mines disgorge
The riches of this world's supply;
Make ready cellars, caskets, coffers,
For earth's bright bowels and what she offers.

While fortune turns its back on many,
And laughs at all their idle moans,
It smiles on you with open arms.¹⁹¹

A lottery ticket dealer who found himself with a winning ticket may have had a very good reason for holding his tongue and maintaining a poker face. Suspicions of a rigged lottery were always a possibility. The fact that Pieter Blussé makes no mention of such a stroke of luck in his autobiographical sketch does not necessarily mean that it never happened. Including it, however, might have compromised the moral of his story. His

van de zeden en gewoonten der Nederlanden in de XVe, XVIe, en XVIIe eeuwen [Amsterdam 1862] esp. 152-66). On the lottery in the earlier period see also A. Huisman and J. Koppenol, *Daer compt de lotery met trommels en trompetten! Loterijen in de Nederlanden tot 1726* (Hilversum 1991) [= Zeven Provinciën series 3].

¹⁸⁹ Abraham Blussé Sr must also have done well from the lottery, given the fact that in 1777 he was able to purchase the mansion Mijnsheerenherberg for 7,000 guilders (S.D. Post, *Pieter Boddaert en Rutger Schutte. Piëtistische dichters in de achttiende eeuw* [Houten 1995] 206). The book business had already been handed over to his son six years earlier. When Abraham died in 1808 he was not very rich, but that may have had to do with the fact that during the Dutch restoration period he was deprived of his lottery job and therefore had to live off his capital for a long period of time (Pieter writes about his removal from office in his autobiography: GAD, BFA, inv. 11).

¹⁹⁰ See Post, *Pieter Boddaert en Rutger Schutte*.

¹⁹¹ J.E. Voet, *Mengeldichten* (GAD no. 1818). As cited in P. Breman and J. Rijken, *Dichters in Dordt* (Dordrecht 1983) 18.

autobiographical sketch was written to serve as a model for his offspring, the underlying message being that what matters in life is merit, not luck. A winning lottery ticket, or any other act of chance, is not in keep with this argument. The huge amount of effort and sacrifice that Pieter put into his bookselling business and publishing house, however, receives his fullest attention.

CHAPTER SIX

A NECROLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE, CULTURE AND FOLLY: THE PUBLISHER'S LIST AND THE INVISIBLE HAND IN THE ARCHIVE

I consider—and I have always done so—that my books resemble the lots in a lottery. And I should be vastly contented were they to be reprinted in 1900¹



48. Silhouette of Pieter Blussé Sr (1748-1823) of 1785. Museum Mr. Simon van Gijn Dordrecht.

Profile of a Publisher

How do you characterise a publisher's list that spans eighty-five years and three generations and that grew into a repository with more than 1,500 titles covering every imaginable topic? What else can you do but stroll through this imaginary stockroom, pluck a book at random from the shelves, leaf through it and gasp in amazement? Hidden behind every cover is an entire universe: clergyman bombard one another with abstruse theological argu-

¹ Stendhal (pseud. Marie Henri Bayle, 1743-1842), *Memoirs of an egotist*, tr. Andrew Brown (1st imp. 1882; London, 2003).

ments, explorers come with reports from the North Pole,² professors agonise over the length of university holidays,³ William V is enthusiastically sung to at his investiture⁴ (while years later the Patriot hero Johan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol wins the popularity prize⁵), in 1813 the French are given a send-off that is no less exuberant,⁶ and a doctor worries about the dangers of breech birth.⁷ Behind other covers we find a handbook on the natural history of teeth,⁸ details on the care of dogs⁹ and a discussion of the consequences of the Turkish war for Europe;¹⁰ there's an expedition to the sources of the Missouri¹¹ and a guide on how to perform inoculations with cowpox vaccine.¹² Many of these titles require the reading of yet more books just to make them comprehensible and accessible, so that the researcher wishing to guide the reader through the repository (assuming even that were possible) with more than a mere cursory knowledge of the collection would be compelled to adopt an attitude characterised by Brouwer as bibliomania: 'a love for all books'.¹³

One way to tackle this problem is the tried and tested method of side-stepping it. The titles can be transcribed according to sound bibliographical practice, preferably with bibliographical fingerprints and signature verification, and printed in neat lists at the back of the book as an appendix so that readers can form their own opinion, while the researcher limits himself to simply handing out tickets to the exhibition, amazed by the erudition of the collection he has assembled. Given the amount of energy involved in making correct bibliographical entries and the amount of in-

² A. Fischer, *Dagboek eener ontdekkingsreis naar de Noorderpoolstreken* (Dordrecht: Blussé & Van Braam, 1822).

³ [C.J.C. Reuvens], *Bedenkingen over de vraag, of de vacantiën der hoogeschole ... al of niet, te lang zijn* (Dordrecht 1824).

⁴ A. Blussé, *Gelukwensch aan Nederland met de verheffing van Willem de Ve* (Dordrecht: A. Blussé & Son, 1766).

⁵ *Op het afbeeldsel van Johan Derk van der Capellen* (Dordrecht/Leiden 1785). This refers to a portrait with panegyrics by D. van Alphen, P. van Schelle and others. Blussé published it in collaboration with the Leiden publisher L. Herdingh.

⁶ *Afscheid van de Franschen* (Dordrecht 1813).

⁷ P.S. Kok, *Verhandeling over het gevaar en de verbetering der algemeene handelwijze in voetbaling* (Dordrecht 1797).

⁸ J. Hunter, *Natuurlijke historie der tanden van den mensch* (Dordrecht 1773).

⁹ *Natuur en huishoudkundige historie der honden* (Dordrecht 1796).

¹⁰ Volneij, [C.F. de Chasseboeuf de], *Waarschijnlijke gevolgen van den tegenwoordigen Turkschen oorlog, en derzelver invloed op de staaten van Europa* (Dordrecht 1788).

¹¹ *Reize naar de bronnen van den Missouri* (3 vols., Dordrecht 1816-18).

¹² *Handleiding tot de kennis der enting met koepokstof* (Dordrecht 1819).

¹³ H. Brouwer, 'De vele geschiedenissen van het boek. Bij wijze van inleiding', *Jaarboek voor boekgeschiedenis* 1, 7-24, 17-18.

vestment capital that publishers consider adequate for the publication of books for a small market, this democratic method is most practicable for publishers whose lives were short and whose list was not too extensive.

A second way of coming to grips with the unmanageable contents of the repository is to break the titles down into a number of standardised categories, do the necessary calculations and roughly outline a number of developments in the list, with or without the aid of graphs. Because there are no objective criteria for classifying the contents, and because such a classification is immediately complicated by the problem described above—how to gain insight into a collection that comprises a single human lifetime—the solution is usually to classify based on more or less external characteristics. These may be genres, languages in which the book was published or from which it was translated, or the format in which it was printed. This is the method I used for Blussé's list for the period 1745-1830, and again it is not without its complications. Some of these complications were merely an annoyance for the researcher; the choices made are then justified in an appendix. Others deserve closer attention, however, because they are the result of a number of characteristics typical of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century book market.

As shown in the chapter on book advertisements, it was common practice in the eighteenth-century book trade for one publisher to buy up large or small batches of list titles from a competitor.¹⁴ These batches could be remaindered, given a new title page and launched afresh at the old price or dressed in a brand new cover to take on a whole new existence. Blussé did this when he bought up a number of volumes of a periodical, had them bound and presented them to the public as an encyclopaedia. After reprinting copies of certain numbers that had become scarce, he could once again offer a complete series. And, by adding an index, he could even give the series a new identity. That would have been manageable if the books had changed hands only once. But titles switched their owners more often than their camouflage. Sometimes this was because the new owner had different distribution channels at his disposal; Blussé, for example, had good connections in rural Zeeland and the Southern Netherlands, and Allart had a better line of communication with booksellers in Groningen and Friesland. Sometimes it would involve a small quantity of remainders that the new owner thought he could sell in his own town. When it came to remainders, the books simply changed owners because it was not customary for pub-

¹⁴ Also see Dongelmans, *Johannes Immerzeel Jr.*, 321-22.

lishers to offer their own titles at reduced prices. Indeed, this is still uncommon in the book trade.

The biggest problem is that the publishers in question were not always helpful in providing further information in their advertisements or their lists. The researcher might then decide to make no distinction whatsoever, but to give all the flowers in the reconstructed list the chance to bloom together. Apart from a number of other objections, this would produce a distorted picture of an exponential growth in the range of titles available in the eighteenth century. And for the many titles whose takeover date cannot be traced, the year of publication would have to be dated to before the publisher's own date of birth, thereby obliterating any temporal development in the nature of the book supply.

One might decide to include only those titles that are certain to contain the title page of the publisher in question. This approach implies that the only titles to be included are those that were preserved in libraries, which would entail another distortion: only part of the list—and probably the most durable and costly part—would be visible. For this research I have therefore opted for a slippery via media: obviously the titles that were produced by the publisher are valid candidates for selection, but batches of books that were taken over from other publishers qualify too—provided they were acquired with the copyright. The ownership of the copyright can be found on the title page or in the text of an advertisement, review, prospectus, deed of transfer and the like. Numerous sources were consulted in order to arrive at an overview of the Blussé list, for which I refer the reader to the appendix.

For the period 1745-71 I had access to an enumerative notarial deed of transfer for the list titles, drawn up when the bookseller-publisher's was purchased in 1771. The period after 1790 is relatively well documented owing to Saakes's register of published books, and from 1797 to 1819 is even quite complete owing to the availability of the compositors' ledger. This left the period 1770-90 in danger of being underrepresented. To remedy this, I scanned twenty years of the newspaper *Rotterdamsche Courant* for book advertisements placed by the firm A. Blussé & Son.¹⁵ Another problem was that the 1771 deed of transfer only contained current titles from the Blussé list; this problem was somewhat overcome by making a thorough perusal of review periodicals *Boekzaal* and *Vaderlandsche letteroeffeningen* from 1745 to 1771. Although the result was a more balanced view, it was still

¹⁵ Volumes 1770 to 1790.

not enough to allow any far-reaching conclusions to be drawn from, say, the threefold increase observed in the number of titles between 1772 and 1806.

The decision to accept batches of books purchased with copyright as part of the list stems partly from a somewhat materialistic view of the book business. Originally I had wanted to study the Blussé list to gain an impression of possible developments in the taste of eighteenth-century readers. In this respect it is interesting to look at the titles to which Blussé, as a publisher, did not give his personal stamp but did consider marketable enough to invest in. With the criterion of a purchased copyright, small batches of remainders that required little investment and only muddled the waters were excluded. One might well wonder, however, whether a list compiled in this way does justice to the individual profile of the publisher—when trying to determine how much Blussé differed from his competitors, for example.

This question seems to worry the researcher of today more than it did the publisher of the past. In both his autobiographical sketch and his letter to Heinemeyer, Pieter Blussé mentions a number of titles he is proud of. These lists include 'homegrown' titles as well as titles he purchased from others:

A joint publication, with my father, of Schultens's *Catechismus Verkl[aring]*, likewise another important acquisition, first in Amsterdam from J. Morterre, then from the former Company in Rotterdam, and, further, our participation in the famous list of Isaak Tirion; yielded the sweetest fruits—Then not only these, but also a current, closed partnership with Mr Holtrop of Amsterdam for the publication of his father's *Eng[elsch] Woordenb[oek] en Grammar*, as well as a monthly periodical: *Genees-, Natuur- en Huishoudkundige Jaarboeken*, of which over 100 numbers have been issued. This along with my personal acquisitions and completion of *Nederlandsche Reizen*,—*Nieuwe Reiziger*—*Schouwtoneel der Natuur*, *Michaelis*—*Buffon* and many others I could name, together with many of my own publications, of which I shall merely mention: *De Mensch van zijner zwakke zijde*—*de Handleiding tot de Physionomiekunde*—*Iets Dichtmatigs*, written by my father—*Lauwerbladen voor de zonen der vrijheid*—*De Handwerken* etc., on all of which I have expended particular care and labour.¹⁶

The list of highlights he drew up for the period 1795-1807 also consists of a jumble of his own 'performances', copy purchased from others that had already been printed, reprints and even a batch of 'French Bibles' that was

¹⁶ GAD, BFA, inv. 11.

obtained without copyright but apparently earned him such a profit that he thought it deserved mentioning in his autobiography:

After an initial quiet period there was again a demand for various items from my extensive repository of bound and unbound books,¹⁷ which has recently received further reinforcement with the acquisition and presentation of the Works of Janson, Tafreel van Natuur, Zedel. Verhalen, Euler and Kist; and especially those acquired with my oldest son, such as Staring's Bijbelsch Woordenboek and the French Bibles, the copy for the Dict. portatif which I acquired from my late, and at the time very aged father; and that which I should have mentioned first, the Kantiques, which I never would have thought of if my son had not sent them and given me his support.

If we follow Pieter's hints and construct a profile of him as a publisher on the basis of his own lists of accomplishments, then what emerges is a confusing mixture of commercial and cultural successes and personal preferences, the one not necessarily precluding the other.

Hints from the Publisher

Laurels and Man and his Weaker Aspects

The publication that appeared in 1781, *De mensch van zijne zwakke zijde* (Man and his weaker aspects), translated from the German, is one of the few satirical works Blussé ever published. There was nothing new about the genre. It was a type of satire dating back to the seventeenth century in which authors and their publishers tried to elicit a few laughs with a grotesque portrayal of 'human types'.¹⁸ Because almost everyone was considered fair game, even the book historian with a mission had to take a few knocks. He was reflected in the 'Bright Spark' who makes do with a few facts from the back cover of a book: 'such an acid tongue always reveals a vacuity of soul, which this mask will surely cover up'.¹⁹ Since the genre itself had been around for a while and the book was not an original Dutch work

¹⁷ Initially it read 'Boekenfonds' (booklist) but that has been crossed out and replaced by 'Boekenmagazijn' (book repository).

¹⁸ A. Baggerman, *Een drukkend gewicht. Leven en werk van de zeventiende-eeuwse veel-schrijver Simon de Vries* (Amsterdam 1993); R. Dekker, *Humour in Dutch Cultrue of the Golden Age* (Basingstoke 2001).

¹⁹ 'Everything that the bright spark reads he attempts to devote himself to entirely.... His memory and his notebooks are filled with the stuff, and lo he appears, fully equipped, in society. He prowls, just like a hunter in the forest, in order to communicate the extent of his store.' (*De mensch van zijne zwakke zijde beschouwd* [2 vols.; Amsterdam 1784] II, 14).

but a translation, we would expect that its presence in Pieter's panopticon was at least owing to the fact that it had been a commercial success. But probably this was not the case, since the second volume was not published by him but by his Amsterdam colleague J. Weppelman.²⁰ Still, there is no reason to doubt Pieter's business instincts. He himself may have been a bit guilty of the human weakness of vanity. He probably translated *De mensch van zijne zwakke zijde* himself or at least contributed to the translation, since this title is mentioned along with the publications to which Pieter said he had devoted 'a great deal of work and insight'. The same was probably true of Pieter's *Handleiding tot de physionomiekunde* (Handbook for the study of physiognomy) from the same series, which has already been extensively discussed.²¹ This was a cheap imitation of the famous work by Lavater that had been published by his rival Allart, but unlike Allart's edition it was never reprinted. The 1784 anthology of religious poems by Abraham Blussé Sr, *Iets dichtmaatigs of bundel van zede-dichten over de winden, wolken, het graf, de eeuwigheid, mijne ellende, mijne verlossing, mijne dankbaarheid, en andere belangrijken onderwerpen* (Something poetic, or a collection of moral poems about the wind, the clouds, the grave, eternity, my misery, my salvation, my gratitude and other important subjects) was probably not a commercial success either. It is the only book in the A. Blussé & Son list that was not published under this imprint but personally under the name of Pieter Blussé. It is also this collection that earned Abraham an exquisitely-crafted silver casket, a gift from the lady to whom the poems were dedicated.²²

Pieter also probably wanted to draw attention to his father's poetry in his autobiography, since it constituted an important segment of the list due to Abraham's great productivity. It was no accident that he chose the only collection of Abraham's poetical works to be mentioned in Witsen Geysbeek's *Biografisch woordenboek der Nederduitsche dichters* (Biographical dictionary of Netherlandish poets) of 1821. This reference book appeared when Pieter was working on his autobiography. One can assume that he was aware of the contents as his name figures on the book's subscription list.²³ Witsen Geysbeek selected *Iets dichtmaatigs* from Abraham's

²⁰ *De mensch van zijne zwakke zijde beschouwd*. Evidence of this takeover is to be found in an advertisement in RC 20 April 1784.

²¹ The first volume was published in 1780 and the second volume in 1782.

²² See Chapter Two under the heading 'Sponsoring'.

²³ P.G. Witsen Geysbeek, *Biografisch, anthologisch en critisch woordenboek der Nederduitsche dichters* (6 vols; Amsterdam 1821-27) I, List of subscribers, X.

oeuvre on account of the 'dignity' with which he said the author treated his subjects.²⁴ Geysbeek had less regard for the rest of Abraham's poetic oeuvre.

That this praiseworthy, devout poet could also tune his instrument to a bold, audacious tone is apparent from some of the poems he has written that have appeared in other collections.²⁵

In the accompanying footnote Witsen Geysbeek refers to a few poems by Abraham in the *Lauwerbladen voor de zonen der vrijheid* (Laurels for the sons of freedom). This anthology of patriotic verses is rehabilitated in Pieter's autobiographical list. He also draws attention to this work in his list of episodes yet to be dealt with (they never were) under the heading 'my political conduct'. This collection of 'Vaderlandsch'²⁶—national—work, in which the leaders of the Patriot movement are dealt with one by one, must be regarded as one of the most explicit political manifestoes in the Blussé list. The intended monumental character of the work was enhanced by bringing in well-known engravers such as J. Buijs, D. Kuipers and L. Brasser and by sparing neither 'expenses' nor 'decoration' in its workmanship. The 'Handwerken' that is then mentioned in Pieter's list, the twenty-four-volume *Volledige beschrijving van alle konsten, ambachten, enz.* (A complete description of all the trades, professions, etc.) must in turn be seen as a manifesto of social engagement and—because Pieter was successful in bringing this tedious undertaking to a satisfying close—proof of his reliability.²⁷

That certainly does not apply to the work that Pieter Blussé published with his father in 1777, '*Shultens Catechismus verkl[aring]*' (Schultens's catechism explained) or *De leere der waarheid vervat in den Heidelbergschen catechismus* (The doctrine of truth contained in the Heidelberg Catechism). If he simply could not resist mentioning it in his autobiography, then that was his decision. This publication may have been an ethical tour de force in terms of content but the same does not apply to the story behind its publication.

²⁴ Witsen Geysbeek, *Biographisch ... woordenboek I*, 298-303.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 303.

²⁶ For a more detailed explanation of the contemporary connotations bound up with this term see J.J. Kloek, 'Vaderland en letterkunde, 1750-1800' in N.C.F. van Sas (ed.), *Vaderland. Een geschiedenis van de vijftiende eeuw tot 1940* (Amsterdam 1999) 237-75.

²⁷ For more detail see Chapter Four.

Schultens's Catechism Explained

This concerns the publication of a number of lectures given by Professor Albert Schultens of Leiden, then deceased, which were recorded and translated from Latin by the ultra-orthodox, Orangeist clergyman Joan Barueth of Dordrecht. Blussé published these notes without the permission of the professor's surviving relatives and without having paid the copyright fees.²⁸ The absence of copyright legislation in the eighteenth century has already been discussed in an earlier chapter. But there was one exception to this rule. In 1728 a group of Leiden professors managed to force the States of Holland to issue a decree which protected them from unwanted publication not only of their texts but also of their lecture notes.²⁹ In 1776, when Albert Schultens's son, Johannes Jacobus, found out that Blussé had opened the subscription list for a work based on his father's lectures, he immediately notified Cornelis de Witt, Dordrecht's chief magistrate, basing his objections on the above-mentioned decree. As a result the publication was banned.³⁰ Schultens was not reassured that this measure would actually be effective, however, and he would be later proven right. He feared that Barueth and Blussé might try to sidestep the decree by having the work printed outside Holland. Although publication would still be a punishable offence according to the text of the 1728 decree, Schultens doubted that the Dordrecht chief magistrate would take any action, as he stressed in a letter to a friend:

But I have my reasons not to take for granted that the lord chief magistrate would bring action, unless the collective heirs keep a very close eye on Barueth, who loves the smell of money, and make sure he does not try to

²⁸ It was not the first time that Blussé joined forces with Barueth. The following works written by this controversial Dordrecht preacher were also published by Blussé: *Historie van het stadhouderschap der heeren princen van Orange* (Dordrecht 1765); *De regering van Nederlands stadhouderen met die der Israëlsche rigteren in vergelijking gebragt* (Dordrecht 1766), dedicated by the author to Prince William V; the anonymously published *Letterkundige brieven ter verdediging van de leer en leeraars der Gereformeerde kerk, tegen de heimelyke aanslagen in de schriften van den Denker, en in de Vaderlandsche letter-oeffeningen* (Dordrecht 1768); *Historie van den Heiligen Stephanus* (Dordrecht 1770); *Hollands en Zeelands jubeljaar* (Dordrecht 1772).

²⁹ Van Eeghen, *De Amsterdamse boekhandel V*, 27 and I.H. van Eeghen, 'Leidse professoren en het auteursrecht in de achttiende eeuw' in *Economisch-historisch jaarboek XXIV*, 179-208.

³⁰ This is apparent from remarks in a letter from Schultens to Rijklof Michael van Goens dated 17 March 1776 in which the passage in question from the decree is extensively cited (the correspondence between Van Goens and Schultens is to be found in the KB, HS 130 D 14 O 5-11).

obtain that tidy sum by evading the decree.... At a suitable moment I shall tell you in person why I tend to mistrust Mr De Wit. Keep this to yourself and do not breathe a word of it.³¹

Schultens may have been suspicious of De Witt because, like us, he knew about the close family ties between the Blussés and Cornelis de Witt, who had been counsel for the family when Pieter was at loggerheads with Sophia's guardians. Like Pieter, De Witt had joined the Dordrecht branch of the Oeconomische Tak in 1777 and was the author of a work Blussé published in 1778, *Bedenkingen over het aanhoudend gebruik van de pijnbank* (Objections to the continued use of the rack).³²

Initially, Schultens thought that Blussé had been effectively deterred by the chief magistrate's action. He expected that, in the short term, the translator Barueth would be the greater threat. Having had his appetite whetted by the high fee Blussé had offered him—three thousand guilders—Barueth might decide to take refuge with another publisher. He had heard rumours that Barueth was looking for a publisher in Utrecht. So Schultens decided to make inquiries of his friend Rijklof Michael van Goens, the Utrecht magistrate: 'Be so kind as to look into the truth behind these rumours. I have been unable to discover the name of the bookseller in question'.³³ Within four days he received the answer, far from reassuring, 'that no one knew anything about it' but that bookseller Schoonhoven claimed 'to have sent his subscriptions to Blussé quite recently'.³⁴ A week later Schultens received a visit from Pieter Blussé who—unsuccessfully—still tried to persuade him to agree:

The young Mr Blussé of Dordrecht came this afternoon accompanied by a mutual friend from Rotterdam. The bookseller departed quite crestfallen, and all the authorities that he has been dealing with on behalf of his father and himself have proved fruitless.³⁵

Schultens was convinced that they had not heard the last of the matter. He had the impression that Pieter Blussé had so set his mind on this publication that he would be capable of ignoring the legislation.

It seems to me that the great interest he takes in this case will persuade him to elude the ordinance. I think I have reason to suspect that the work

³¹ Ibid.

³² This publication will be dealt with later on.

³³ KB, HS 130 D 14 O 5-11, 11 March 1776.

³⁴ Ibid. In a letter from Van Goens to Schultens dated 15 March 1776.

³⁵ In a letter from Schultens to Van Goens dated 25 March 1776.

of the Catechism will be printed in Rotterdam, evidently at Blussé's expense, under the name of a foreign bookseller. This is the way he dealt with the *verrezenen Bucerus*, a text which *Barueth* did not want to approve of because it was by someone with a tolerant attitude, so *Blussé* published it under the name of *Baarstecher in Cleves*.³⁶

In short, by proudly mentioning Schultens's *Catechism* in his autobiography, Pieter had accidentally opened the door to a closet concealing not just one skeleton but two. For indeed in 1776, under the imprint of Baerstecher of Cleves, there appeared a Lutheran work titled *De verrezenen Bucerus: Vredemaker tusschen hedendaagse Zwinglianen en Calvinisten, ter zake der geschillen des H[eiligen] Avondmaals* (Bucerus resurrected: A peacemaker among Modern Zwinglians and Calvinists on the disputed subject of the Lord's Supper).³⁷ Even after an examination of this text, however, which takes a position in a religious conflict within the Lutheran church of Cleves, it is unclear what Blussé intended to do with this illegal publication. Perhaps he was returning a favour to the Lutheran clergyman who had put in a good word for Pieter with Sophia's guardian Van Oven at the time of his engagement in 1771, since Van Oven lived in Cleves.³⁸ But perhaps Blussé had nothing to do with the publication, and Schultens had been misled by rumours once again. Part of this rumour—that the *Catechism* would be printed in Rotterdam at Blussé's expense—proved to be accurate. Schultens's intuition that he could detect in Blussé a certain disingenuousness was also correct. Blussé contended that if Schultens did not agree to the Blussé publication then Barueth was perfectly capable of having the Albert Schultens lecture notes published anonymously:

Blussé suggested more than once that D. Barueth might resort to anonymous publication. We quickly agreed that such an action would be mean-spirited and unseemly. I do not trust those two, however, and they are certainly not above taking a low blow. For Blussé let slip that D. Barueth seemed eager to engage in a war of words with me. Reaching his objective, however, will not be as easy as he thinks.³⁹

Pieter Blussé's suspicion was soon proved correct. On Wednesday 17 April 1776, three weeks after Pieter's visit to Schultens, a raid was conducted at the Rotterdam printing office of Stephanus Mostert & Sons, led by the Rotterdam chief magistrate, the bailiff Jan Cordelois. There the printed quires

³⁶ Ibid. The underlining is by Schultens.

³⁷ This rare book is to be found in the collection of the UBA.

³⁸ For this see Chapter One under the heading 'Calling in reinforcements'.

³⁹ In a letter from Schultens to Van Goens dated 25 March 1776 (KB, HS 130 D 14 O 5-11).

and the manuscript of a book by an anonymous author titled *Regtsinnige verklaring van den Heijdelbergischen Catechismus* (An orthodox Reformed exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism) were seized.⁴⁰ The firm commissioning this work was the Dordrecht printer-publishers A. Blussé & Son. This discovery did not result in Blussé shamefacedly renouncing any further attempts to market the publication against the express wishes of Schultens's progeny. On the contrary, it led to sharp protests from the publishers. Through their lawyer, in high dudgeon, they let Cordelois know that they had learned 'to their utter outrage' that 'by insinuation my lord had approved' the seizure from the printer's 'by a court usher of the printed pages of a certain work... along with the copy or manuscript of the same, via facti and on his own authority, along with additional threats' and on improper grounds. Not only did they demand that their property 'be returned in undamaged state', but they also threatened 'in the case of refusal, delay or ambiguous or incomplete reply' to demand compensation for the delay and for the costs incurred, legal and otherwise.⁴¹ This display of temerity issued from the fact that, as a precautionary measure, the name Albert Schultens had been carefully left out of the book. Cordelois only realised this during the actual seizure. After having read the printer 'a letter' in which was stated 'that this work was by Professor Schultens', he discovered when studying the work that his solid legal footing had been pulled out from under him.⁴² Finally, in 1777, A. Blussé & Son, with the permission of the classis of Zuid-Holland, published the two-part *De leere der waarheid.... Uit syn eigen latynsch handschrift vertaald* (The doctrine of truth Translated from his own Latin manuscript) by J. Barueth. Every word of this was indeed accurate, for Barueth had been a valid student of A. Schultens and had taken notes on the lectures he heard in his own hand. In his foreword Barueth fails to mention on whose manuscript he had based his translation.

J.J. Schultens did not have much time to remain annoyed. After letting himself be seduced into engaging in a bitter war of words with Barueth 'on the publication of an orthodox Reformed exposition of the Holy Catechism' against all his good intentions—'they are certainly not above taking a low

⁴⁰ This is apparent from the protest that the Blussé firm lodged with the Dordrecht notary and solicitor Leendert van der Horst (GAR, ONA, inv. 3051, 1111, 19 April 1776).

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² This is apparent from a number of extensive statements made at Blussé's request to the Rotterdam notary Woutherus de Prill by the printers concerned: Stephanus Mostert, Johannes Mostert and Gillis Mostert (GAR, ONA, inv. 3414, 1, 21 May 1776).

blow'—he died in 1778.⁴³ It is hardly surprising to learn that Blussé was also the publisher of this polemic. The clash was probably all it took to render the name Albertus Schultens superfluous in the publication itself; it was still 'widely acclaimed persons' in the 1776 advertisements.⁴⁴ In Blussé's later advertisements for this work we see Schultens' name gradually reappearing, overshadowing Barueth's.⁴⁵ This publication, unlike the catalogue titles discussed above, was probably a commercial success. In his autobiography Pieter Blussé included the book among the titles that had yielded 'the sweetest fruits'.

Pieter engaged in several other enterprises that produced 'the sweetest fruits': the purchase of catalogue titles from the bankrupt estate of the Amsterdam bookseller Jan Morterre and from the list of the dissolved Rotterdam Company, 'as well as our participation in the famous list of Isaak Tirion'. There are no details available on the amounts paid by Blussé for titles purchased from Morterre and the Rotterdam Company.⁴⁶ The records of the Tirion Company, which ran from 1779 to 1810, are a clear indication that Pieter was not exaggerating when he included this takeover among his 'sweetest fruits'.

The Tirion Company

The Tirion Company, also known as the Amsterdam Company in Blussé's records, consisted of the distinguished Dutch booksellers J. de Groot and G. Warnars of Amsterdam, S. and J. Luchtmans of Leiden, V. van der Plaats of Harlingen and A. and P. Blussé of Dordrecht. In 1779 the company invested 38,700 guilders in the list of publisher Isaak Tirion, who had died in 1765. They were able to increase this capital over a period of ten years to a total of 103,758 guilders and 3 stivers.⁴⁷ The working methods of the Tirion

⁴³ *Briefwisseling tussen Jan Jacob Schultens en Johan Barueth, over de uitgave van een Regtzinnige verklaring over den Heidelbergischen Catechismus* (Dordrecht 1776).

⁴⁴ RC 11 January 1776 and 6 February 1776.

⁴⁵ In the publisher's list at the back of the enlightened *Zoroaster, Confucius en Mahomet, vergeleeken als hoofden van gezindheeden, wetgeevers en zedemeesters* by the French author C.E.J.P. Pastoret, Barueth is still credited as the author, but with this addition (in contrast to earlier announcements): 'based on the Latin of the famous Leiden professor Albertus Schultens'. The name Schultens is still printed in this catalogue but in a smaller type size than that of Barueth. In later lists this difference is eliminated (see for instance the list at the back of J.D. Michaelis, *Nieuwe overzetting des nieuwen testaments* IV [Dordrecht 1801]).

⁴⁶ Jan Morterre went bankrupt around 1788. See GAA, Archief desolate boedelkamer (no. 5072), inv. 961, 1406.

⁴⁷ KVBBB, Luchtmans archive, Luchtmans company book, Blu 19:53.

Company—the last large such company, according to Van Eeghen—exemplify the above-mentioned complexity of the eighteenth-century book trade.⁴⁸ The company purchased batches of catalogue titles from Tirion's widow, and later from firms such as the Rotterdam Company, with or without the copyright. In the case of multi-volume works, if the company held the copyright it would print extra runs of any missing volumes. Then all the volumes—the old printed works and the reimpressions—were given new title pages and put back on the market.

When the company's ledger was examined, attention was focused on possible differences between the various volumes in stock. These differences were apparent in the thirty-three-volume Tirion publication *Hedendaagsche historie of tegenwoordige staat van alle volkeren* (Contemporary history or the present state of all peoples) and Rademaker's nine-volume *Kabinet van Nederlandse oudheden* (Cabinet of Dutch antiquities). These books probably lent themselves to being sold separately because each volume deals with a different region or place. Evidently many eighteenth-century buyers did not intend to acquire the entire series but only bought those volumes that interested them. Of the *Hedendaagsche historie*, for example, 179 complete series were in stock at the time of purchase, twenty-four series were missing the nineteenth volume, and there were a great number of loose volumes varying from nine to 719 copies each.⁴⁹ In the case of Wagenaar's *Verkorte Vaderlandsche historie* (Abridged Dutch history), on the other hand, the stock remaining after the takeover consisted mostly of complete sets but without the plates. There were 2,508 sets in stock in small octavo format with 146 sets of accompanying plates, as well as 387 in large octavo with sixty sets of accompanying plates on large paper. As for Wagenaar's large-format *Vaderlandsche historie*, the company had only one size and one quality of paper to deal with, but that did not make the bookkeeping any easier. There were still 356 complete sets of this work without copperplates; thirteen of them were missing the twenty-first volume and eighteen were missing the nineteenth volume. There were 1,001 sets with copperplates. While these were an improvement over the first printing, it was the portraits that apparently had been most in demand. Only thirty-six sets of these remained. The large discrepancy between the

⁴⁸ Van Eeghen, *De Amsterdamse boekhandel* V, 334.

⁴⁹ Making it even more daunting are the different qualities of paper used, the different languages and/or different book formats. For instance, there were still forty-four copies of the first part of the *Kabinet* on royal size paper, sixty-three on medium paper and eight on small size paper.

number of volumes in stock and the number of plates in stock suggests that many of the plates in Wagenaar's *Verkorte Vaderlandsche historie* and the more extensive version, later purchased by Allart, were sold separately.

The paper work for the additional print runs, completed and planned, was very complex, since it was all custom made. In this sense it would be unreasonable to suppose that the company became rich without effort, even though the operation was fairly low-risk. Their greatest financial success, however, was not the publication but rather the non-publication of a particular work—a work that, amazingly enough, would later become known as one of the most successful productions of the eighteenth century. This was a reprint of a series that Tirion had already published twice, in 1749–59 and in 1770, the twenty-one-volume *Vaderlandsche historie* by Jan Wagenaar and its forty-eight-volume sequel, written by P. Loosjes. The company sold the copyright of this work, which it had bought from Tirion in 1788–89, to Johannes Allart for a sum of 12,500 guilders.⁵⁰ The right to publish sequels to this work of history was sold for 15,000 guilders. The contract also stipulated that if Allart should get around to publishing the volume for the year 1787, the company would receive another 3,000 guilders.⁵¹ In view of the fact that the 1787 volume was indeed published, we can conclude that with this transaction alone the company had earned more than enough to repay the capital they had invested in 1779. But was parting with the rights to Wagenaar's history a prudent commercial move?

The reason for the sale was Allart's publication in 1788 of a work with the title *Vaderlandsche historie, vervattende de geschiedenis der Vereenigde Nederlanden, 22ste deel* (History of the nation, comprising the history of the United Netherlands, twenty-second volume) to which had been added 'an immediate sequel to Wagenaar's Dutch history'. The company decided to take action against this, since they considered this edition to be an infringement on the copyright they had obtained for the first twenty-one volumes, even though the twenty-second had not been previously published. This right had not gone uncontested, as can be seen in the phrasing of the notarial deed drawn up between the company and Allart:

and should it be considered that the ownership and privilege pertain only to the work of the author, and not to sequels that another person might choose to publish, the course of action of the other party would be sufficient

⁵⁰ They had had the copyright extended in 1782 for a sum of 112 guilders and 17 stivers (Van Eeghen, *De Amsterdamse boekhandel* V, 223).

⁵¹ GAA, Notaries, J. Harmsen, 3 June 1788 (no. 16390, 282ff.) and 12 November 1789 (no. 16395 p. 724ff.). The quotations that follow are taken from these contracts.

to deter anyone else from printing and publishing works which might have sequels added to them, to the considerable detriment of the book trade in general.

Their line of reasoning was partly ethical: if Allart's initiative was not suppressed, it might set a precedent that could harm the book trade as a whole. Allart was probably more intimidated by the accompanying threat: that if he persisted in publishing the sequel, the company would beat him at his own game. In such a case, they would 'henceforth act in like manner with regard to works published or yet to be published by the party of the other part'.⁵² In his reaction, Allart seemed to be sticking to his guns. He emphasised that technically he did have the right to bring out a sequel to an existing work; he had 'done nothing that... was not permitted to any other bookseller'. But because he did not want to cause harm to the book trade or to other booksellers, he was willing nevertheless to pay a sum of money for the copyright. The enormous amount that he finally handed over—without having to incur any debts, it should be noted—makes it obvious that this was more than just a noble gesture. The Tirion Company, in which, as already mentioned, a number of large publishers were united, was wealthy enough to make Allart's life a misery for quite some time by printing sequels to a number of his successful publications. In addition, there was also the chance that if the company was not bought off it would continue to thwart his plans for publishing a sequel to the *Wagenaar*. Apparently Allart had very high hopes for this project⁵³ and, considering the large number of subscribers registered in 1790, his expectations were justified.⁵⁴

Did the company allow itself to be ruled too much by fear in 1788? It is doubtful whether, at that point, they had any other option but to sell their copyrights for the highest possible sum. After all, for the company to publish its own sequel after Allart had already started on his in 1788 would have been fighting a rearguard action. They had had ten years to develop a sim-

⁵² This argument is very much like an agreement that was drawn up in 1710 among a number of booksellers, who pledged that when one of their works went into reprint they would use 'the best copies of the person making the reprint and reprint them jointly' (quoted in Baggerman, *Een drukkend gewicht*, 50).

⁵³ Allart's reprint was estimated at 6,500 copies. The profit made by Tirion on the earlier editions of this work gives some indication of Allart's profit. According to Jacobus Scheltema (in a letter to Bodel-Nyenhuys from 1833) Tirion made 168,000 guilders profit on his two editions, with an estimated 8,500 copies (L.H.M. Wessels, *Bron, waarheid en de verandering der tijden. Jan Wagenaar [1709-1773], een historiografische studie* [The Hague 1996] [= *Hollandse historische reeks* 27] 85, 245).

⁵⁴ See Chapter Four, first part.

ilar initiative themselves, and the company ledger shows they had failed to do so.⁵⁵ The company did have a reprint of *Wagenaars Vaderlandsche historie verkort*⁵⁶ in the pipeline, a reworked edition for children in the form of questions and answers. Preparations were also underway for a new version of the work by J.W. te Water.⁵⁷ The contract explicitly stated that the rights to the summaries written for children had not been handed over to Allart.⁵⁸

Perhaps they did not dare to take on the enormous investment that the forty-four-volume sequel must have meant for Allart. Or perhaps Allart was just a little too quick off the mark with his initiative of 1788—one year after the Patriots' uprising in the Republic had been ended by a counter-coup. The fact that in 1788 the company demanded an extra payment for the 1787 volume shows that they too had come to the conclusion that there was a market for an updated *Vaderlandsche historie*, with special emphasis on the history of the recently-ended Patriot period. In 1788, however—a year before the French Revolution—neither side could have foreseen that the political turbulence in the Republic was far from over. A future Batavian Republic, complete with a change of power and a period of Napoleonic rule, was still in the lap of the gods. The demand for updated historical information would constantly be stoked, which meant Allart would keep doing good business by producing his sequels.

Although Pieter Blussé may later have regretted his Pyrrhic victory over Allart, he had no reason to complain. From the sales figures that were kept

⁵⁵ KVBBB, HS Blu 19.53 [E 16].

⁵⁶ J. Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche historie verkort, en by vragen en antwoorden voorgesteld* (Amsterdam etc. 1782). This is a reprint of the work of the same title first published by Tirion in 1758 and reprinted in 1759 and 1770.

⁵⁷ J.W. te Water, *De Vaderlandsche historie van den Heere J. Wagenaar, verkort, en met leezame aanmerkingen, ten dienste der Nederlandsche jeugd* (4 vols.; Amsterdam etc. 1784–1800). The same company published an updated reprint of this work in 1808, and in 1820 (when the company had been discontinued) it was reprinted by Blussé and Van Braam once again.

⁵⁸ Allart obtained 'the copyright, the privilege and all the copperplates and maps of the *Vaderlandsche historie* by J. Wagenaar, twenty-one volumes, in addition to the right to publish an abridged version of the *Vaderlandsche historie* in large octavo, based on the copies now being published, beginning with the entire work in as many copies as he ... sees fit; without permission to publish the volumes separately, and without the copperplates of *Verkorte historie*, which remains the property of the sellers.... The sellers will also retain possession of the copyright of volume one of Te Water's *Verkorte Vaderlandsche historie* and the following volumes yet to be published, as well as the abridged *Vaderlandsche historie* by J. Wagenaar in question and answer form in octavo, Dutch and French'. (GAA, NA, notary Harmsen, file 16395, 724ff., 12 November 1789).

by each of the partners, Blussé, with an average annual turnover of 1,056, guilders, proved to be the largest seller but one.⁵⁹ This net result confirms the picture already painted of Pieter Blussé as a great wholesale book-seller. The fact that he achieved a larger volume of trade than Luchtmans, De Groot, Schouten and Van der Plaats may have been due to his location: Dordrecht, the cornerstone of Holland. From there he could service Brabant, Zeeland and the Southern Netherlands, areas where the market for old titles from the list of the Amsterdam publisher Tirion was apparently far from saturated.

A Dictionary and a Periodical

The location of Willem Holtrop's business must have been one of the reasons why he and Pieter Blussé joined forces in the publication of John Holtrop's English-Dutch dictionary and the monthly magazine *Genees-, natuur-, en huishoudkundige jaarboeken* (Yearbooks of medicine, natural science and housekeeping), also mentioned in Pieter's autobiography. The advantages to Pieter Blussé of having a partner in Amsterdam, the buzzing centre of the book trade, are obvious. That certainly held for the publication of a magazine like the *Jaarboeken*, which dated quickly and required frequent contact with scores of authors, many of whom lived in Amsterdam and the surrounding area. In an earlier chapter it was noted that for his edition of the *Volledige beschrijving van alle konsten, ambachten, enz.* Pieter Blussé had drawn more than once on Holtrop's network of authors. The editor-in-chief of the *Jaarboeken*, Jacob Voegen van Engelen, had done some translation work for Holtrop in the past⁶⁰ but had gone to Blussé with the concept for a periodical, an idea which he may actually have stolen from Holtrop.⁶¹ This made it difficult for Holtrop, if he had wanted to, to pass over his former master Blussé and publish the periodical on his own. A conflict with Blussé was best avoided, for both professional and personal reasons.

In the year 1777, just when the periodical was in production, Willem's father John Holtrop was locked up in Dordrecht prison at his stepmother's instigation. Holtrop, she claimed, was an alcoholic who was prone to vio-

⁵⁹ This concerns the turnover from 1780 to 1803.

⁶⁰ He was probably involved in the translation of *Zedelijke vertellingen* by J.F. Marmonet published by Holtrop in 1778. This work was supposedly translated from the French by 'V.V.E.'—Voegen van Engelen.

⁶¹ See Chapter Four.

lence and could no longer be managed at home. Willem Holtrop did everything he could from far-off Amsterdam to get his father out of jail,⁶² and this included approaching the Blussés for help. In 1778, when the first number of the *Jaarboeken* appeared, he asked them to make a statement vouching for John Holtrop's solvency and reliability.⁶³ The family declared that Holtrop earned 800 guilders a year just from the translation work he was commissioned to do for the Blussé publishing house. Up to this point the Blussés probably had not had to violate their 'love for the truth'. It must have been more difficult for them, however, to state that 'after the preceding agreement we never unexpectedly came upon said person in such a state that we observed that he was the worse for drink and incapable of carrying out his business' without batting an eye. In a number of other documents in the legal dossier John Holtrop is indeed portrayed as a notorious alcoholic. On 2 November 1777, for example, W. Hordijk wrote a despairing letter to his nephew Willem Holtrop informing him that he was not able to do anything to prevent John's incarceration because he 'could not be convinced by reason'.

Since you are quite aware of the situation I did not respond to your proposition that you or someone else should confront him, for he always has a ready answer. If someone tells him that he is drunk, he says, that is a lie. If someone says, you drink too much strong drink, he then asks, if a man's constitution is such that he can cope with a tankard of gin or brandy, then shouldn't he be permitted to drink this much? If someone answers, no, then he says, yes, and so on. I can testify that there is no convincing him, and I believe you know this better than I. In short, people have been watching him for a long time to see if he is improving, but he never does.

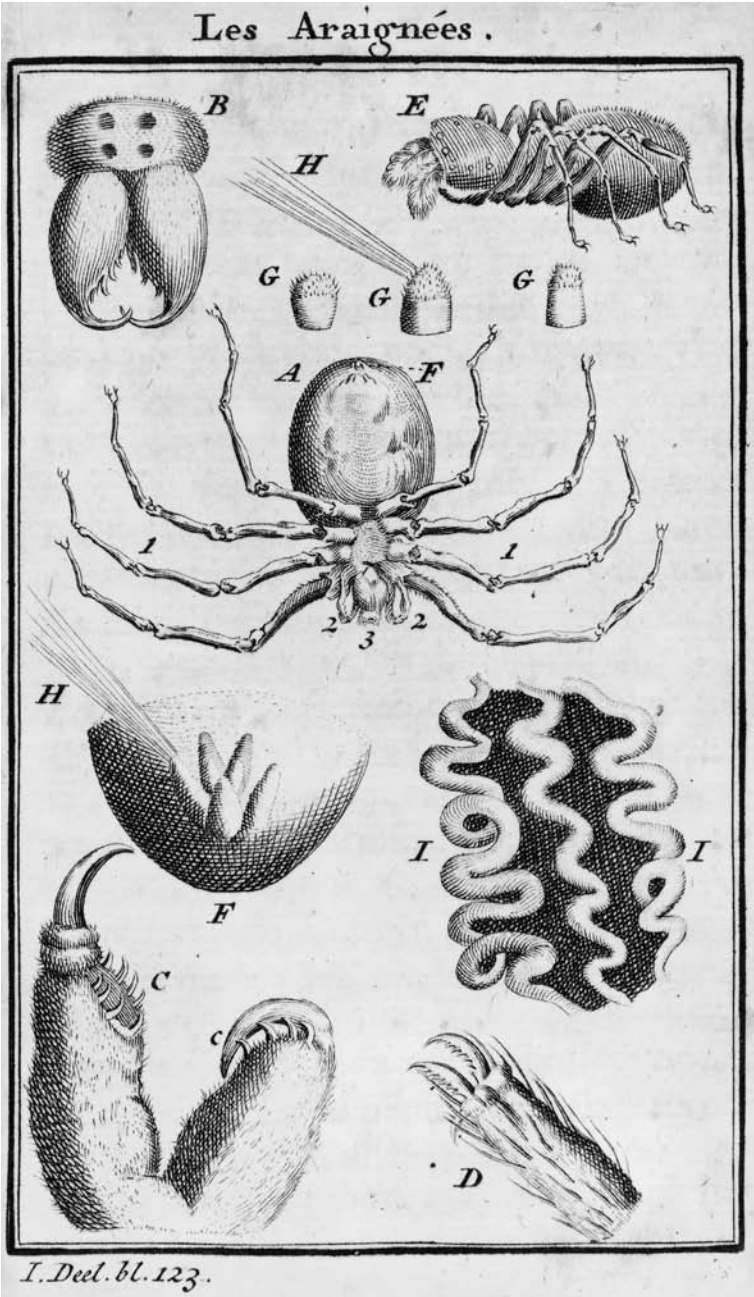
There were far more advantages to working with Pieter Blussé than the opportunity to nurture a friendship for the sake of John Holtrop's precarious situation. Blussé was also in a better position than Holtrop to maintain contact with J.D. Pasteur, Van Engelen's close associate. In 1778, Pasteur, later a member of the National Assembly, was still employed as a customs officer for convoys and licences for the 's Gravandeelse Kil near Dordrecht.⁶⁴

Publishers outside the Dordrecht area could find it interesting to work with Pieter Blussé for other reasons besides these incidental motives, the

⁶² GAD, ORA, inv. 603 contains a detailed dossier on this case. The quotations in this paragraph are taken from material in this dossier.

⁶³ They made this statement on 18 March 1778.

⁶⁴ Elias and Schölvink, *Volksrepresentanten en wetgevers*, 182-83.



49. Illustration from Noël-Antoine Pluche's *Schouwtooneel der natuur* (17 vols.; Amsterdam/Dordrecht 1737-1788). National Library, The Hague.

main one being the strategic position of Dordrecht with regard to the south. It was no coincidence that the only work published by Johannes Allart in collaboration with Blussé was one of both national and regional importance: P. van Oldenborgh's *Belegering en verdediging van Willemstad* (The siege and defence of Willemstad), published in 1793. This city, when it wasn't under siege, was within easy reach of Dordrecht across the water.⁶⁵

Judging from Pieter's two-month business trip through Zeeland, Brabant and Flanders made at the beginning of his publishing career, 'when I harvested new fruits for both the trade and my spirit', the firm greatly valued its business contacts with the south.⁶⁶ Blussé's scathing advertising campaign against an Antwerp publisher who had dared to publish a pirated edition of one of his catalogue titles might therefore be interpreted as an attempt to protect his market in Flanders. On closer consideration, however, there may have been other motives. The book in question was Noël Antoine Pluche's *Schouwtoneel der natuur*—which, like all the publications discussed in this chapter, is explicitly mentioned by Pieter Blussé in his autobiography as one of the highlights of his list.

Pluche

On 25 April 1786 Blussé advertised in the *Rotterdamsche Courant* that they were the 'sole publisher and owner of the widely respected *Schouwtoneel der natuur* dealing with the arts, crafts, factories and the distinguished sciences, comprising XIV volumes with at least 200 illustrated plates, in octavo', and that 'to their distress [they had learned] that a certain Spanoghe of Antwerp had plans to print the same work; and to this end he was now inviting people by printed announcements to subscribe to his imperfect edition'. Having cautioned this publisher 'in a friendly manner' to abandon this objective, but having received no reply, he felt obliged to warn his

fellow citizens, and all readers of any taste in Brabant and Flanders, against such a self-seeking enterprise and a most slipshod reprint.

⁶⁵ The question is which factor was dominant—distribution facilities or the opportunity to make frequent visits to local notaries in order to put pressure on defaulters? As discussed earlier, the eighteenth-century book trade probably suffered less from distribution problems than from the credit economy, which forced booksellers to spend a great deal of time at the notary. This is evident from the stacks of notarial deeds relating to Pieter Blussé found in the records. So priming his son Jan Jacob for the job of notary was a strategic move seen in this light.

⁶⁶ GAD, BFA, inv. 11.

Blussé did more than just warn the public. To thwart Spanoghe's enterprise, he decided to take one more step. He announced that the price of his own edition—which the advertisement emphasised was much better—would be reduced from 32 to 24 guilders a copy, and that the public could subscribe at this price until the end of June. Given the fact that a pirated edition by an Antwerp publisher had driven Blussé to launch a large advertising campaign announcing a twenty-five percent price reduction, it might be concluded that he expected this publication to form a major threat to his own market. Presumably that meant the 'certain Spanoghe'—probably the young Antwerp bookseller Cornelius-Martinus Spanoghe⁶⁷—had a good distribution network in Holland. It might also indicate that part of Blussé's distribution area included 'all readers of any taste in the provinces of Brabant and Flanders'. Although this interpretation fits in with other similar clues, it probably does not apply here. The price reduction cannot have been much of a sacrifice for Blussé. The work had already been offered at 24 guilders a copy in an earlier subscription in 1783.⁶⁸ When the fifteenth and sixteenth volumes were published in 1784 they were offered at the same price.⁶⁹ It looks as if Blussé had seized on Spanoghe's pirated edition as a way of circumventing what was a normal bookselling practice in the Dutch Republic without losing face. This allowed him, in spite of all earlier assurances that the price would rise after the subscription period had elapsed, to reduce the price in proper fashion. It could not have happened at a better moment, because just then the seventeenth volume in the works: the index for the previous sixteen volumes.⁷⁰ A new group of subscribers for the first sixteen volumes, attracted by the old price, would automatically expand the market for the index.

Although Blussé's indignant advertisements give the impression that the Dutch translation of Pluche's *Schouwtoneel* was entirely his handiwork, his only initiative had been the publication of the last two volumes and the index. He had purchased the other volumes, with copyright, from other publishers. The copyright and the remaining copies of this work, which had already been published twice in Dutch, must have been purchased in around 1783 from his Amsterdam colleague Jan de Groot. By then the work

⁶⁷ At that moment he was twenty-eight years old and had been actively involved in the book trade since 1781 (Paape, *Mijn vrolijke wijsgeerte*, 130).

⁶⁸ RC 17 April 1783 and 29 April 1783.

⁶⁹ RC 11 December 1784. On 30 August 1788 the complete seventeen-volume work was advertised in the *Rotterdamsche Courant* for a sum of 37 guilders and 10 stivers.

⁷⁰ This volume was published in 1788.

numbered fourteen volumes, of which Pieter had reprinted volumes nine through fourteen, adding two more volumes and a detailed index, the aforementioned volume seventeen.⁷¹

A Natural History

There is also a story attached to Pieter's publication of *De algemeene en bijzondere natuurlijke historie* (The general and particular natural history) by Buffon and Daubenton, which in his autobiography is included in the same list as the Pluche publication. In 1791 Pieter had purchased the remaining copies and plates of the first seventeen volumes, the sequel rights and a number of copies of the French version, along with some remaining copies of Buffon's *Histoire naturelle des oiseaux* (Natural history of birds) and the copyright for the complete works by this author—all this for the impressive sum of 13,600 guilders from the Amsterdam publisher J.H. Schneider.⁷² He added one more volume to the series, translated and revised by J.D. Pasteur, and with this eighteenth volume put it on the market once again.⁷³ Included in the takeover price was the right to translate Buffon's works from French into Dutch. In 1800 he sold these translation rights and the Dutch edition to Allart, but retained the right to publish Buffon's French work.⁷⁴

He did make use of this right, for between 1796 and 1799 he published both Buffon's nine-volume *Histoire naturelle des oiseaux* and his five-volume *Histoire naturelle des minéraux* (Natural history of minerals). For these titles we can avail ourselves of deeds of transfer (some drawn up privately), and we also have the unique opportunity to watch Pieter at close range by studying the setter's account book kept by his son, so we can separate the wheat from the chaff with a certain amount of precision. Although the nine-volume *Histoire naturelle des oiseaux* is presented on the title page Blussé's own publication, in fact the only birds he was introducing were foreign ones: Schneider's. The only mention made of this publication in

⁷¹ In 1799 it emerged that the work had been taken over by Willem Holtrop and two other Amsterdam partners, who presented it as their own publication and put it on the market for 20 guilders a copy.

⁷² The contract was made privately without the aid of a notary. It dates from 21 June 1791 (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 51).

⁷³ This volume appeared in 1793.

⁷⁴ The contract dates from 30 December 1800. This contract was also made privately (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 51).



50. Title page of the 18th volume of George Louis Leclerc Buffon's *Algemeene en byzondere natuurlyke historie*, which was published by Blussé (Dordrecht 1793). National Library, The Hague.

the setter's ledger is the typesetting of a number of new title pages.⁷⁵ As Schneider had supplied Pieter with a total of 850 sets of Buffon's work in 1791, a reprint was not necessary. This was not the case with Buffon's *Histoire des minéraux*, for which he had obtained the copyright but no copies. Knowing this, there is nothing about the title page of *Histoire des minéraux*, reissued by Blussé in 1798 and 1799, that should surprise us: it is quite accurate.⁷⁶ The sale of Buffon's French birds was not disappointing, judging from the print run of this sequel on minerals. On 14 April 1798, two years after Blussé had begun distribution of the 850 *Oiseaux*, the first volume of

⁷⁵ On 20 July 1797 (GAD, Archief Dordtse uitgevers- en drukkersmaatschappij, inv. 76).

⁷⁶ Ibid. Printing this work began on 14 April 1798.

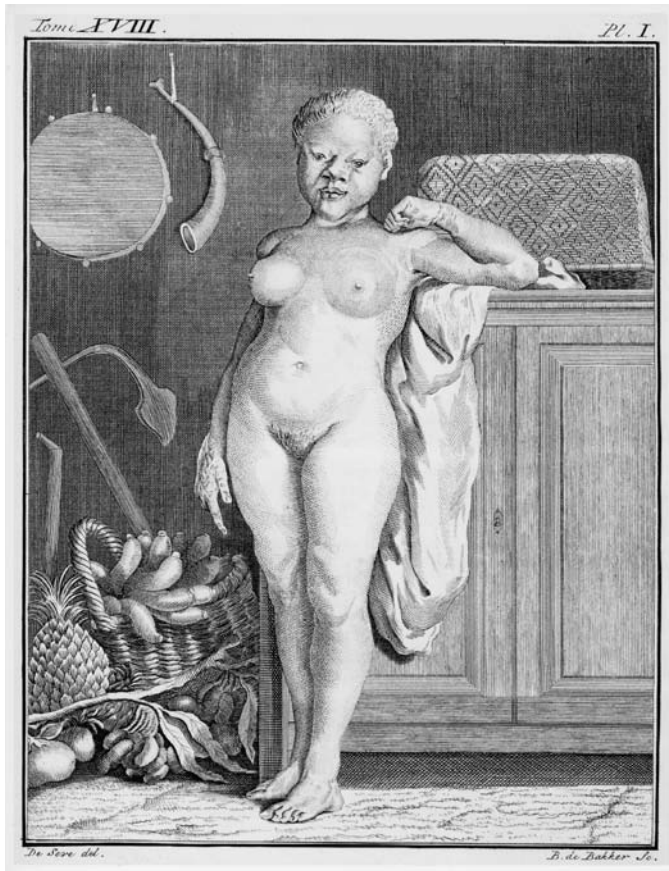
the *Mineraux* was printed in a run of 750 copies, with 600 printed on small-format paper and 150 on large-format paper. After only a few weeks it became clear that the minerals were not going to fly out of the shops. Towards the end of April, when the second volume was being set, the print run was adjusted to 600 copies, 150 still on large-format paper.

Of all the complicated puzzles with which eighteenth-century booksellers try to gladden the hearts of book historians, the history of *Natuurlijke geschiedenis* is unique in the number of pieces that have been preserved.⁷⁷ So in this particular case an attempt will be made to speculate on the profit it secured.

We know that Blussé bought a batch of Buffon's work as specified above in 1791 for 13,600 guilders and resold part of this batch again in 1800 for the sum of 3,048 guilders. Since the contract with Schneider and the one with Allart only state the total amount paid for the whole batch, they are not much help. As we have seen, what Blussé acquired from Schneider was more than just the remaining copies and plates of *Natuurlijke geschiedenis*. The acquisition price included the copyright and the rest of the work by Buffon. Fortunately, the contract drawn up with Schneider anticipates a great many calamities. One concerned the possibility that, upon delivery, Blussé would discover that not all the books and works he had paid for had actually arrived. Were that to occur, the contract specified the exact amount that was to be deducted from Blussé's debt to Schneider. This makes it possible to estimate the purchase price paid by Blussé, since the amounts are specified by edition. If copies were missing from the complete seventeen-volume Dutch and French *Natuurlijke historie* printed on large-format paper with plates—one 'copy' being a complete set—then 32 guilders was to be deducted from the bill. If these were copies printed on ordinary paper, then 20 guilders was to be deducted; if they were the copies for which the first fourteen volumes were printed without plates, then 12.50 guilders was to be subtracted from the bill, etc. If we compare these amounts—which we may assume are reasonably close to Blussé's purchase prices—with the prices at which Blussé was offering these editions to the public in a list from 1793, then the result, to put it mildly, is a substantial profit margin.⁷⁸ The edition for which 32 guilders would have had to be deducted, had it been

⁷⁷ See J. Raven, *Judging new wealth. Popular publishing and responses to commerce in England, 1750-1800* (Oxford 1992) 36.

⁷⁸ This list is to be found at the back of J.H. Reisig, *De suikerraffinadeur*, the eleventh volume of the *Volledige beschrijving van alle konsten*.



51. Portrait made in April 1777 of Geneveva, an albino negress who lived on the island of Dominica. Illustration in the 18th volume of Buffon's *Algemeene en natuurlyke historie*. National Library, The Hague.

found to be missing in 1791, was now being sold for a sum varying from 144 guilders on 'ordinary' royal size paper to 288 guilders for copies that were 'very well printed with anatomical illustrations and vignettes'. The Dutch edition on ordinary paper that was purchased for 20 guilders now cost 90 guilders. The eleven-volume edition without the anatomical part that sold for 7 guilders would now bring in 55 guilders despite the defect. Without Blussé's sales figures for this book one can only guess at the profit but it must have been astronomical. The fact that in 1798 Blussé decided to print the sequel *Mineraux* in a print run of 750, after having had ample time to explore the market for Buffon's work, suggests that sales were hardly slow.

The contract between Pieter Blussé and Johannes Allart points in the same direction. If we add up all the Dutch-language variants bought from Schneider—with or without plates, deficiencies, etc.—we arrive at a total of 424 copies of which only 160 were apparently remaining in 1800. Assuming therefore that Blussé must have sold 264 at 90 guilders a copy while the purchase price was around 20 guilders, that would result in a profit of 18,480 guilders. That is overly optimistic, of course. Schneider probably charged a higher amount per copy than the sum to be deducted on failure of delivery. In addition the copying costs have not yet been taken into account, nor has any allowance been made for expenses such as printing and distribution of the prospectus and of the eighteenth volume, advertisement costs, notary fees and bookseller's discount (sixteen to twenty percent).⁷⁹ Nevertheless, even if only half of the profit of 18,480 guilders was left after deducting these sums, which are difficult to calculate—and it must be remembered that this was only a part of the lot purchased from Schneider—it begins to explain how Pieter Blussé was able to buy his son a complete printing house and newspaper in the year 1797.

And Allart's profit? In 1800 he bought 160 copies of the eighteen-volume Dutch edition at 24 guilders a copy, which he then offered to the public—both booksellers and private individuals—for 36 guilders a copy in a prospectus from November of that year. On 2 March 1801 he advertised in the *Rotterdamsche Courant* that he only had fifty copies left in stock. That could mean that in less than three months he had sold 110 eighteen-volume Buffons, which would have earned him 1,320 guilders, not counting advertising costs and other expenses. With that the market for the Dutch-language *Natuurlijke historie*—which had probably been printed in a run of about 800—was apparently completely saturated. Allart, who had also bought the copyright, never published a reprint. That is another reason why Blussé, who like Allart and a number of other major Dutch booksellers specialised in publishing Dutch books, chose to invest in a French sequel instead. The *Oiseaux* and *Minéraux* are among the few foreign-language editions in the Blussé list. This decision was not a deliberate choice in favour of French but came about due to a series of coincidences. Blussé had been able to buy a batch of 850 copies of the *Oiseaux* at a cheap price. In

⁷⁹ Van Goinga, *Alom te bekomen*, 83, note 173. It should be remembered that Pieter Blussé Jr received a ten-percent discount for list articles from the company of his oldest brother and his father, but this may have been a wholesaler's discount. This discount shows up in the calculations in a number of Pieter's account books: GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 59.

the case of the *Mineraux*, the five-volume sequel, he must have been hoping that the buyers of the previous work would want to have two complete sets on their bookshelves—both sets in French, of course. An additional consideration was that in his contract with Schneider the small print contained the proviso that should Blussé publish a reprint of Buffon's work in Dutch during Schneider's lifetime, he would have to pay Schneider the sum of 2,500 guilders. Should Schneider, however, die within six years of the sale, then the sum would be reduced to 1,000 guilders, payable to his heirs.

Proper Firstlings: Bougainville, Cramer and Hunter

Pieter's true ambition, however, lay in publishing books in the vernacular, as he also emphasises in his autobiography:

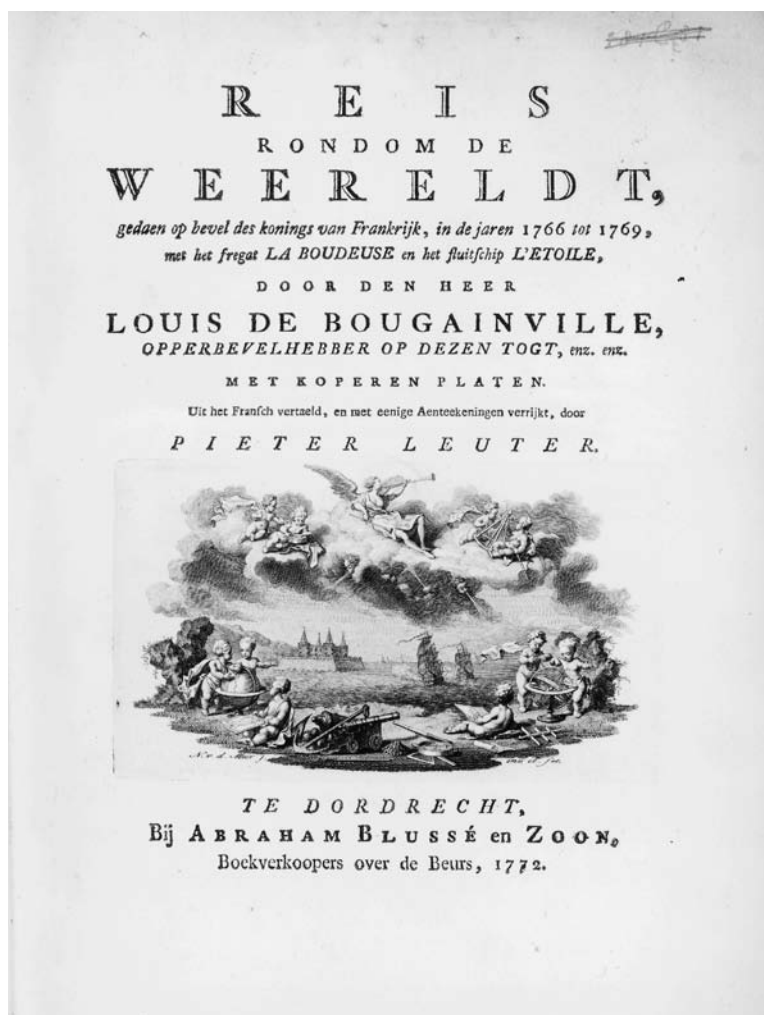
Being somewhat proficient in modern languages, I realised early on that I would have to single out those books that I felt my fellow countrymen most needed to have published. Thus Bougainville's journey round the world, Cramer's suffering Emmanuel and Hunter's Natural history of teeth are among my firstlings. Clothed in proper Dutch attire, they were to prove very beneficial to my livelihood and my good name.⁸⁰

These titles, which did indeed appear in quick succession at the beginning of Pieter's career, in the period 1772-75, had not yet been translated into Dutch and must have considerably enhanced his reputation.

Pieter wasted no time, and in 1772 he came out with a translation of the still-celebrated work by Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, prepared by professional translator Pieter Leuter, a good friend of Abraham's and a Rotterdam society man.⁸¹ The original French publication, *Voyage autour du monde*,

⁸⁰ GAD, BFA, inv. 11.

⁸¹ Pieter Leuter was one of the poets who in 1771 composed a marriage poem on the occasion of Pieter Blussé's marriage to Sophia Vermeer (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 58). He also wrote a poem in 1772 for the silver wedding anniversary of Abraham Blussé and Kornelia Vallaré (Ibid., box 3). In 1774 he composed a wedding song for the marriage of Pieter's sister Geertruida Blussé to Clement Lens (Ibid., box 42). In these verses his intense friendship with Abraham Blussé is emphasised. He was the translator of a number of titles in the Blussé list: Bourdé de Villehueth, *De scheepsbestierder* (Dordrecht 1768); L. de Bougainville, *Reis rondom de weereldt* (Dordrecht 1772) and Debonnaire, *Lessen der wijsheit* (3 vols.; Dordrecht 1769). In 1776 a collection of his poems was published by Blussé titled *De kruiskerk, of spiegel van gewetensdwang*. After his death in 1785 Pieter Blussé was appointed as an executor of his will along with the Rotterdam boarding school proprietor Kornelis van der Palm, the father of the man who was later to become Agent of National Education, Johannes Henricus van der Palm. From a number of unpaid bills in his estate—Blussé still owed him 300 guilders for the years 1783-84—it would appear that he not only worked for Blussé but that he translated and did correction work for some Rotterdam



52. Title page of Louis-Antoine de Bougainville's *Reis rondom de weereld*. National Library, The Hague.

had only appeared in 1771.⁸² In 1772 and 1773 detailed advertisements were placed in the *Rotterdamsche Courant* to give the readers a foretaste of the exotic trip they would embark upon with Bougainville after purchasing the

publishers (see GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 1 in which there are a number of deeds relating to his estate that were drawn up by the Rotterdam notary J.P. van Heel).

⁸² The work was published in France under the title *Voyage autour du monde*. In 1772 an English translation followed titled *A voyage around the world*.

book: 'an encounter with the people of Patagonia; an elaborate report and description of the island of Tahiti.... An extraordinary stay and reception in Batavia'. Readers who desired to know a little more before making their purchase were referred to an extract that had appeared in the *Nieuwe Nederlandsche bibliotheek* (new Dutch library).⁸³

It is now believed that Bougainville's work must have made an important contribution to the popularisation of the ideas of the Enlightenment: the belief 'in the moral worth of man in his natural state'.⁸⁴ Information on the distribution of Bougainville in the Dutch language region can be obtained from the subscription list inserted into the work. This list contained 292 names of booksellers, reading clubs and private buyers who had signed up for a total of 347 copies. Included in the list are a number of now familiar names: Abraham Blussé; the Dordrecht sugar refiner A.B. van den Brandeler, to whom one volume of the *Volledige beschrijving van alle konsten, ambachten, enz.* be dedicated; one of the future authors of the *Volledige beschrijving*, H. de Haas; Pieter's former apprentice Willem Holtrop; Jacobus Loveringh, with whom Pieter himself had trained; Jan Morterre, from whom Pieter would purchase a number of titles after Morterre's bankruptcy; Pieter's brother-in-law C.A. van Sprang; and Hermanus Wachter, whose acrimonious pamphlet would be published by Pieter in the 1790s but who was just about to leave for the Dutch East Indies in 1772. Among these well-known names there were also a great number of reading clubs and commentators, however, and it is fair to suspect that Bougainville's lust for adventure was shared by more than 347 individuals. The list included the commentator Reyer van den Bosch, later a fiercely patriotic commentator; Ahasverus van den Berg, the future editor of the Enlightened children's newspaper *Vriend van kinderen*, in which Abraham Jr published his first piece; and the author of the pamphlet that was so crucial to Dutch political thinking, *Aan het volk van Nederland* (To the people of the Netherlands): Johan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol.

Two other works Pieter Blussé published in 1773—the *Natuurlijke geschiedenis der tanden van den mensch* (Natural history of human teeth) by the English physiologist, surgeon and anatomist John Hunter⁸⁵ and the five-volume *De lijdende Emanuel* (The suffering Emmanuel) written by the

⁸³ RC 1 December 1772, repeated 5 December 1772, 28 September 1773, repeated 2 October 1773. The subscription period opened in November 1771 (RC 7 November 1771, repeated 12 November 1771).

⁸⁴ *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 419.

⁸⁵ This work was translated by Pieter Boddaert.

Enlightened German Lutheran theologian Jonas Andries Cramer and published from 1773 to 1775⁸⁶—played their part in changing the way people thought, each in its own field. The influence of these two translations is even more difficult to assess than that of Bougainville because the subscription lists no longer exist. The author of *De lijdende Emmanuel*, which was soon reprinted in the German language region, wrote a letter to Blussé expressing his wish that the publication ‘will bring you as much profit as it did the German publisher’, but a Dutch reprint was never necessary.⁸⁷ In around 1795 Pieter sold off the remainder to his Amsterdam colleague Gerbrand Roos, who relaunched it onto the market with his own title page.⁸⁸

The *Natuurlijke geschiedenis der tanden* had less time to gather dust on the shelves. It was remaindered in 1779 by the Hague publisher C. Plaat.⁸⁹ The same fate awaited Bougainville’s *Reis rondom de wereld*, which changed addresses a few more times. It was offered to the public at a reduced price by Willem Holtrop in 1779⁹⁰ and seemed to have been given another chance in 1796 when the Amsterdam publishers Schalekamp and Van Grampel published a second impression.⁹¹ Since the price of this reprint by the latter publishing house was even lower than Holtrop’s edition, we wonder (with the vicissitudes of Buffon’s work still fresh in our memories) whether this second impression was not just a remainder with a new title page.⁹² This batch then took up residence with the Amsterdam publisher Gerbrand Roos, as we read in an inventory of his property, who, after his bankruptcy in 1808, still had 413 copies in stock, without plates but ‘with the copper’.⁹³

All in all, none of Pieter Blussé’s ‘firstlings’ seems to have been highly remunerative. In contrast to the works and enterprises that he said had yielded the ‘sweetest fruits’—Buffon, the Tirion company, Schultens’s Cat-

⁸⁶ The translator of this work was Johan Herman Hering.

⁸⁷ Blussé did publish the two volumes of *Deftige bespiegelingen, gebeden en geestelijke gezangen over God* by this author in 1778.

⁸⁸ J.J. Bosma, *Woorden van een gezond verstand. De invloed van de Verlichting op de in het Nederlands uitgegeven preken van 1750 tot 1800. Monografie en bibliografie* (Nieuwkoop 1997) 636.

⁸⁹ RC 6 October 1781. The price was now halved. In 1788 the Haarlem bookseller A. Loosjes was selling a few of the remainders at the same price (RC 11 September 1788).

⁹⁰ RC 29 January 1780, repeated 19 February 1780, AC 29 January 1780, repeated 15 February 1780, 3 February 1780, 26 February 1780.

⁹¹ *Alphabetische naamlijst van boeken welke sedert het jaar 1790 tot en met het jaar 1832, in Noord-Nederland zijn uitgekomen ... strekkende ten vervolge op het naamregister van Nederduitsche boeken van R. Arrenberg* (The Hague, Van Cleef Brothers 1835) 79.

⁹² Blussé charged 10 guilders and 10 stivers for the work, Holtrop was offering it for 5 guilders and 10 stivers, Schalekamp and Van Grampel sold it for 4 guilders.

⁹³ GAA, file 5072, inv. 1123, doc. 4221.

echism Explained—the ‘firstlings’ had stuck in his memory mainly because they had been good for his reputation as a publisher. Two of these ‘firstlings’—and possibly even favourites—were probably sacrificed on the altar of the Tirion Company in around 1778. It was in that year that Blussé bought into this company for the sum of 6,450 guilders. It can hardly be coincidental that the above-mentioned titles were advertised by other publisher at reduced prices at this very time, and that his great ‘antiquarian’s catalogue’, mentioned in a previous chapter, dates from 1779.

There are still three list titles from the years 1770-95 that Pieter has submitted to a future biographer and have yet to be discussed: ‘Nederlandsche reizen’, ‘Nieuwe reiziger’ and ‘Michaelis’. In the case of the first title he must have been alluding to the fourteen-volume *Nederlandsche reizen, tot bevoordering van den koophandel, na de Westindien: doormengd met vreemde lotgevallen, en menigvuldige gevaaren, die de Nederlandsche reizigers hebben doorgestaan* (Dutch travels for the promotion of commerce to the West Indies, interspersed with strange adventures and many dangers that Dutch travellers have endured). This work was brought out in 1787 by the Amsterdam publisher Petrus Conradi in partnership with the Harlingen publisher V. van der Plaats, who was also a member of the Tirion Company. A bibliography has attributed it to Blussé, however,⁹⁴ as does a Blussé list from 1794. By then it had grown into a sixteen-volume work.⁹⁵ Once again, Pieter has highlighted a title in his autobiography that conceals purchased cargo. He may have added a few volumes to the work himself, but they could not be traced in the libraries.

Nor was the publication of J.D. Michaelis’s illustrious and Enlightenment-inspired *Nieuwe oversetting des Ouden Testaments* and *Nieuwe oversetting des Nieuwen Testaments* (New translations of the Old and New Testaments) the initiative of Pieter Blussé. He and his Dordrecht business partners Krap and De Leeuw took over the copyright for this work in around 1791 from his Utrecht colleague, the widow J. van Schoonhoven and partner. Pieter contributed far more to this work, however, than to the purchased titles mentioned earlier. Van Schoonhoven had only reached the tenth volume of the new translation of the Old Testament in 1789 when translator W.E. de Perponcher decided to bring his career to a close.⁹⁶ Seven more

⁹⁴ *Alphabetische naamlijst van boeken*, 506.

⁹⁵ *De dwaalingen van Mr. Pitt's tegenwoordig bestuur* (Dordrecht 1794) F8r.-F8v.

⁹⁶ The author of *Onderwijs voor kinderen*, compulsory reading matter for Otto van Eck and the Blussé children.

volumes of the Old Testament were to follow under the supervision of Pieter Blussé and his partners. In around 1795 Krap and De Leeuw also pulled out of the project and Blussé continued the publication on his own. He issued the remaining nine volumes and completed the work with ten volumes of the New Testament. There was nothing unusual about Krap and De Leeuw terminating their involvement in 1795. It was unusual enough that they kept it up as long as they did. As described in detail in Chapter Three, this company had been going downhill since 1793. Its decline came less as a result of inopportune investments, such as the new Bible translation, than of the arrest and later banishment of the brain behind the publishing company: the radical Patriot Jan Krap. After the Batavian revolution of 1795 Krap ended his career as publisher, and his partner De Leeuw moved to Utrecht after having sold the printing house to Blussé. So the largest part of this huge enterprise, the publication of the thirty-six volume Bible in a new translation adapted to the spirit of the age, was something that Pieter Blussé could indeed take responsibility for.

The choice of the Patriot clergyman and professor IJsbrand van Hamelsveld as successor to the original translator, the Orangist De Perponcher, can in some ways be seen as a political statement. But as with Pieter's choice of authors for the *Volledige beschrijving van alle konsten, ambachten, enz.* discussed earlier, it will also have been based on practical considerations. In 1787 Van Hamelsveld had been dismissed from his position as professor in Utrecht for his Patriotic views, while in the same year the Orangist De Perponcher was allowed to join the Utrecht city council.⁹⁷ In other words, in around 1791 Van Hamelsveld suddenly had lots of time on his hands and not much money. For Baron De Perponcher, for whom money was no object, the situation was quite the opposite. Blussé may have anticipated that sales of the Bible translation would be boosted by choosing the Patriot hero Van Hamelsveld as Perponcher's successor. After his political volte-face, Perponcher had felt the weight of public opinion turn against him.⁹⁸ As the sales figures for the widow Van Schoonhoven indicate, it was time for an injection of new blood. The first nine volumes of the *Nieuwe overzetting des Ouden Testaments* were published in a print run of 817. The sale of this work plummeted, however, from 736 copies for the first

⁹⁷ W.W. Mijnhardt, 'De Nederlandse Verlichting nagerekend. De verkoopcijfers van het oeuvre van Willem Emmerij de Perponcher' in E. Jonker and M. van Rossem (eds.), *Geschiedenis en cultuur. Achttien opstellen* (The Hague 1990) 171-85, 172-73.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

volume to 314 for the ninth.⁹⁹ The new Bible translation, published by Blussé from 1791 to 1803 was, like *Volledige beschrijving van alle konsten, ambachten, enz.*, a project for the long haul—longer than Pieter's translators and authors could manage. Blussé must have felt very nervous when Van Hamelsveld was offered a professorship in Utrecht once again after the Batavian revolution in 1795. And he must have resumed his activities with great relief upon learning that Van Hamelsveld had declined the offer, out of consideration for the professor who would have had to make way for him. On 1 March 1796, Van Hamelsveld did agree to accept his elected membership in the National Assembly.¹⁰⁰ The Bible translations continued at a steady pace, however, even after the coup of 1798 (or perhaps because of it), when Van Hamelsveld was imprisoned in Huis ten Bosch.¹⁰¹ Yet sales had evidently been tapering off for a while: in a foreword from 1800 Pieter Blussé announced that, in consultation with Van Hamelsveld, he had sought and found another translator.

The honoured public will observe that we have not ceased with the publication of this work; rather complaints are heard, and not without cause, that the work is not happening more speedily; it is entirely beyond our control, however, that the Honourable Translator, due to an accumulation of increased activities, has not been able to apply himself to the translation with the application and assiduity as he himself has wished, and in which we have not failed to encourage him.¹⁰²

Thanks to this new, anonymous translator, Blussé was able to put the remaining seven volumes on the market within three years. In the end the project took thirteen years to complete.

The Dutch translation from the French of *Nieuwe Reiziger* by Abbé de la Porte, along with the *Volledige beschrijving van alle konsten, ambachten, enz.*, was Blussé's longest-running publishing project. It took twenty-seven years for this thirty-two volume work to be completed—from 1766 to 1792. During this period the publisher changed (Abraham Blussé made way for Pieter) and so did the printer (the Rotterdam printer Stephanus Mostert was replaced in 1782 by the Dordrecht printer Van Eysden & Co.), and even the author and translator were replaced. In the twenty-seventh volume, published in 1783, the reader was notified that Abbé de la Porte had died

⁹⁹ Mijnhardt, 'De Nederlandse Verlichting nagerekend', 184.

¹⁰⁰ Elias and Schölvincq, *Volksrepresentanten en wetgevers*, 103-104.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² J.D. Michaelis, *Nieuwe overzetting des Nieuwen Testaments*, volume 3, third part (Dordrecht 1800).

in 1779 and another, anonymous writer had been carrying on his work ever since. In that year another volume was published, followed by a long period of silence after which it emerged that even the perspective of the author had changed in 1791. In the twenty-ninth through the thirty-second volumes we no longer find the detailed, anthropologically-tinged descriptions of exotic destinations that had marked the previous editions—with forewords that invariably date from the year 1760—but instead we encounter eyewitness accounts that had been recorded far closer to home: France at the time of the French Revolution of 1789. Apparently the French publisher had wanted to use the successful De la Porte concept to offer the public a contemporary work of history, and Blussé in turn had thought it worth trying to find a Dutch market for it. Blussé had shown a great deal of patience with De la Porte, but he should have waited just a little bit longer. In 1788—a year before the French Revolution—he had sold the work to Allart. In that same year Allart began to remainder the first twenty-eight volumes, published by Blussé without illustrations, after having added maps and street plans to each volume.¹⁰³ Pieter may have charged Allart sequel rights upon publication, by which Allart had duped the Tiron Company in 1789, but in this case free of copyright. He may also have explicitly retained the sequel rights in a contract or he may have paid Allart a sum for them afterwards. Whatever the case may be, even as Allart was remaindering the books, Pieter Blussé was coming out with four new volumes. This would not have done Allart's De la Porte project very much harm. A number of Allart's remaining projects would not have been terribly threatened by competition with Blussé either. He beat Blussé to the winning post with his 1790 publication of the translation of J.H. Campe's *Over de staatsomwenteling in Frankrijk* (On the French Revolution). The two-volume *Beknopte geschiedenis der geheele staatsomwenteling in Frankrijk* (Abridged history of the entire French Revolution) by the same author and publisher appeared in the same year—1791—as Pieter Blussé's revolutionary-tinged, semi-sequel to De la Porte, however. Blussé's four-volume history of the French Revolution was more comprehensive. Nevertheless it was completely overshadowed by the twenty-seven-volume *Tafereelen van de staatsomwenteling in Frankrijk* (Scenes from the French

¹⁰³ On 17 September 1788 a prospectus (KVBBB) of this work and a large number of advertisements appeared in the *Rotterdamsche Courant* (RC 25 September 1788, repeated 11 September 1788, 18 October 1788, 28 October 1788, 25 November 1788).

Revolution) by the Dutch authors M. Stuart and J. Konijnenburg that Allart brought out in 1794.

Topography of the Publisher's List

In including the titles discussed above in his autobiography, did Pieter provide a representative cross-section of his list for the period 1770-95? He certainly did not mention all his publications. But he did include his largest multi-volume works and the publications of the Tirion company, which, if we consider his production in terms of volumes, brings us a long way in the right direction. In the period 1771-97, 446 volumes were published by the publishing house A. Blussé & Son—including reprints—more than a quarter of which (about 143) are referred to, directly or indirectly, in Pieter's autobiography.

This implies, of course, that we are still unable to form a picture of more than half of his publications based on the above discussion. Pieter provides a lean selection of all the pamphlets he published in the Patriot period, for example, by highlighting only *Lauwerbladen*. This lack of interest in his Patriot publications must have had something to do with the period in which he was writing his memoirs: around 1820. By that time, more than thirty years after the events, the demands and causes of the Patriots had lost a great deal of their topicality. In addition, although Pieter personally was every inch a Patriot, he had always been very cautious about what he published.¹⁰⁴ For instance, during the restoration he published several works by the notorious Patriot Gerrit Paape, who had gone into exile in Dunkirk. These were only what he called his 'Holy' works,¹⁰⁵ however: *Simson* from 1789, *Jacob* from 1791 and *Salomon* from 1792, and a geographical work about France, *Mijn tegenwoordig vaderland* (My present native land). Blussé left the publication of Paape's more radical works to his colleagues Krap and De Leeuw.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ His list was far less politically-tinged than that of Krap and De Leeuw, Holtrop or Van Paddenburg.

¹⁰⁵ Paape, *Mijne vrolijke wijsgeerte*, 128 (published by P. Altena 1996).

¹⁰⁶ In view of the large stacks of *Simson*, *Jacob* and *Salomon* that the publisher Roos had lying in his attic in 1808, only *Simson* had been a success. This work was reprinted twice within two years. Afterwards the remaining 320 copies of the third edition, along with the other two Bible stories, ended up in Roos's attic in stacks of 237 and 207 copies respectively (GAA, file 5072, inv. 1123, doc. 4221).

What is more remarkable is that at the end of his life Blussé was no longer interested in his 1778 publication of C. de Witt's *Bedenkingen over de aanhoudend gebruik van de pijnbank in Nederland*.¹⁰⁷ In this book it is argued that the rack is an outdated relic from 'savage times'. The Republic is advised to model itself on foreign states such as Geneva, Russia, Sweden and Prussia, where this barbaric practice had been abolished. Even De Witt's choice of a motto from Voltaire shows clearly how much importance he attaches to law reforms: '*Nous cherchons dans ce siècle à tout perfectionner, cherchons donc à perfectionner les loix, dont nos vies et nos fortunes dependent*' (We are aiming to improve everything in this era, let us then try to improve the laws on which our lives and fortunes depend). With his pleas against the use of torture—not banned in the Dutch Republic until 1798—the author was ahead of his times.¹⁰⁸ In A. Perrenot's *Bedenkingen over de beoeffening der rechtsgeleerdheid* (Considerations upon the practice of justice) from 1781 not only are legal reforms advocated but slavery—not abolished in the Netherlands until 1858—is fiercely condemned as well.¹⁰⁹ This book, also published by Blussé, is not mentioned in Pieter's autobiography either.

Another gap in Pieter Blussé's autobiography, strangely enough, are publications by one of the pioneers of the Dutch missionary movement: Johannes Theodorus van der Kemp. Inspired by the London Missionary Society (established in 1795), with which he maintained close contact, this former clergyman tried to set up a similar society in the Netherlands. With this aim in mind, he issued an appeal from the English missionary movement under the title *Adres van het zendingsgenootschap te Londen aan de ingezetenen der Vereenigde Nederlanden* (Address from the London Missionary Society in London to the residents of United Netherlands), which was published by Blussé in 1797.¹¹⁰ This publication, originally brought out in a print run of 500¹¹¹ but reprinted a year later in an edition of 1,050,¹¹² was to give the final impetus to the establishment on 19 December 1797 of the *Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap* (Netherlands Missionary Society)

¹⁰⁷ C. de Witt, *Bedenkingen over het aanhoudend gebruik van de pijnbank in de Nederlanden* (Dordrecht 1778) 14–34.

¹⁰⁸ Buisman, *Tussen vroomheid en verlichting*, 275.

¹⁰⁹ A. Perrenot, *Bedenkingen over de beoeffening der rechtsgeleerdheid* (Dordrecht 1781) 77–87.

¹¹⁰ J. Boneschansker, *Het Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap in zijn eerste periode. Een studie over opwekking in de Bataafse en Franse tijd* (Groningen 1987) 32–41.

¹¹¹ On 9 December 1797.

¹¹² In February and April 1798.

for the propagation and advancement of Christianity, especially among the Heathen.¹¹³ Following on this *Adres*, several other works by Van der Kemp were published by Blussé, even after the missionary had been sent to South Africa: his three-volume *De theodicée van Paulus* (The theodicy of Paul) from 1798-1803 and his *Zegepraal der waarheid over het ongeloof* (Triumph of truth over unbelief) from 1801. Blussé was also responsible for the publication of the five-volume *Gedenkschriften der Maatschappij van Zendelingschap, tot voordplanting van het evangelie in heidensche landen, opgericht binnen London in herfstmaand 1795* (Commemorative writings on the Missionary Society for the dissemination of the Gospel in heathen lands, established in London in the autumn of 1795) from 1798 to 1803, and the work by the Dordrecht clergyman G.J. Schacht, *Opwekkingsrede over den invloed van het Evangelie op de godsdienstige verlichting en daaruit voortvloeiende maatschappelijke beschaving der heidenen* (A trumpet call on the influence of the Gospel in religious enlightenment and the ensuing social civilisation of the heathen), published in 1807.¹¹⁴ Pieter Blussé's early engagement and identification with the missionary movement as a publisher may be connected with the fact that Van der Kemp happened to be living in the Dordrecht area when he was converted to the missionary ideal.¹¹⁵

There is some doubt as to whether this was a deciding factor, however. From a statement made by Pieter Blussé and stored in the family archive, we can deduce that he had a strong affinity with this interdenominational movement.¹¹⁶ The statement is a declaration made by Pieter in July 1800 at the meeting of the Synod of South Holland in which he disassociates himself from their decision to respond negatively to the Missionary Society. Unlike most other Synods, who had gladly welcomed the establishment of the Missionary Society, South Holland, advised by a special committee set up for the matter (of which Blussé was a member) responded by producing a sharply-worded, formally-written missive in which they mainly conveyed their doubts about the movement's orthodoxy. The society was strongly urged to stick to the rules governing church life with regard to conducting

¹¹³ Boneschansker, *Het Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap*, 36.

¹¹⁴ Although the name J. Haafner is never mentioned in this address, it is a criticism of his *Onderzoek naar het nut der Zendelingen en Zendelingsgenootschappen* in which he concludes that missionary work among heathens is not worthwhile (Boneschansker, *Het Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap*, 162-63).

¹¹⁵ After years of doubt and disbelief he finally repented as the result of a tragic event in his life in 1791—his wife and daughter drowned during a sailing trip on the Maas near Dordrecht (Boneschansker, *Het Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap*, 32-33).

¹¹⁶ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 51.

examinations and ordaining the clergy and to ensure that their missionaries signed the *Formulieren van Eenigheid* (Orders of unity).¹¹⁷ Pieter's dissident views ended up in his archive—along with his unaccepted proposals in the municipal council from the same period—to which the following commentary was added at a later date:

In July 1800, as elder, on behalf of the Dordrecht Church, commissioned to the Synod that was held in Leiden; and at that meeting appointed member of the Committee of the Waldensian and East Indian churches: I disagreed with my fellow members at that session of the committee concerning the Report to be issued *regarding the Missionary Society*; yet since they retained their opinions I felt obliged to present my thoughts to the Synod.¹¹⁸

From his statement it appeared that he was particularly disturbed by the committee's intolerance and the meddlesome attitude towards the Missionary Society:

When this matter was being dealt with in the Committee, I immediately began to ask myself: has this Society approached this Meeting with any request for help, counsel or government? And if not, by what authority does the Synod involve itself in the Society's establishment and activities, or issue it orders? I am well aware that this same Society numbers many reputable teachers and members of our Reformed fellowship among its members, but can this be sufficient reason for us to take upon ourselves the task of judging quality?¹¹⁹

He argues that the initiative taken by members of different religious denominations to come together in order to preach to the heathen is deserving of encouragement and support, and certainly should not be frustrated by having the guidelines of the Reformed Church imposed on it unasked—guidelines on which the representatives of the other denominations would never agree:

But above all, the Society unites within itself equally members of as many Christian denominations as exist throughout our native land; so should we not practise all the greater caution in order not to contribute anything that might impede the sweet bonds of union and brotherly love under which all men should live.... After all, the Society has no other purpose, nor do we expect any other, according to the nature of love, than to advance and extend the knowledge of the one true God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent, even among the peoples in most remote lands; what joy and happiness should we then not feel on account of this, and how much are we

¹¹⁷ Boneschansker, *Het Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap*, 152–58.

¹¹⁸ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 51.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

then not obliged to unite our longings with theirs, so that God may bless their work, receiving honour in the name of Jesus, from the rising of the sun until the going down thereof.¹²⁰

Pieter's statement not only reveals his great sympathy for the ideals of the missionary movement but it also shows how undogmatic and tolerant he was towards the other denominations. In this respect he seems to have been somewhat different from his father, Abraham Blussé, who, as we saw in the previous chapter, justifiably described himself as a representative of the orthodox Reformed Christians in a foreword from 1804. And further on in this foreword he says once again, quite emphatically, that 'a mixture of Protestant Christian denominations... is not his choice'.¹²¹

This may be why the 'cast-iron' religious titles in Pieter's list get such short shrift in his autobiography: the collected sermons of mainly Dordrecht clergymen (*Het gekrookte riet* [The bruised reed] did not quite make it, but Hellenbroek did) and the seventeenth-century Voetian authors Wilhelmus à Brakel and Aegidius Francken with similar standpoints. The pietistic contingent did not dominate in Pieter's lists, however, as it had in his father's, which included Verschuur, Zandijk, Cazenove, D'Outrein, Themme, Kulenkamp and Smytegelt. So these authors were published jointly by Pieter and his father, as we learn from Abraham Blussé's estate, and after Abraham's death in 1808 they were immediately removed from the list without any deference to the deceased. Among the estate papers there is a statement for the books from the Blussé list that were sold by the Amsterdam booksellers Gartman and Vermandel at an auction of unbound books: '1021 Franken Kern ... 473 1/4 Nahuisen ... 357 *Kort begrip* by Hellenbroek ... 345 *Molenaar de hoop* ... 304 Brakels'.¹²² The time is ripe to view the list from a greater distance: in stacks.

An Attempt at Quantification

The clearance sales of pietistic titles at the beginning of the nineteenth century does not seem to have been an isolated event. The proportion of theological titles in Pieter Blussé's list dropped in the period 1771-95 with

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ He did this in the foreword to the first volume of his *Proeven van gereformeerde kerkgezangen* (2 vols.; Dordrecht 1804-06), also published by Blussé. For more detail on this see R.A. Bosch, *En nooit meer oude psalmen zingen. Zingend geloven in een nieuwe tijd 1760-1810* (Zoetermeer 1996) 279-84.

¹²² GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 3.

respect to his father's from 42% to 20%, skewed upwards, it should be re-alised, owing to the fact that a large portion of the multi-volume Michaelis work was published during this period. In the years when Pieter's sons were at the helm, from 1807 to 1830, and the Michaelis was complete, this proportion dropped even further: to 18%.¹²³ This trend tallies with the line De Kruif established in her study of book ownership based on property inventories from The Hague, only her findings are more pronounced. In 1700-1710, 76.73% of the privately owned books in The Hague consisted of collected sermons and service books; in the period 1750-60 that was 62.26% and in 1790-1800 it was 57.55%.¹²⁴

It must be assumed that the quantitative developments in the list of one publishing house (with 1,440 titles) are probably less reliable than De Kruif's research findings, which are based on a more large-scale count with a detailed methodological explanation. On the other hand, the developments in the Blussé list may give a more dependable impression of the developments in the period around 1800, with a much greater drop in religious books than is evident in the Hague inventories. De Kruif's last sample period, which deals with the property of people who died between 1790 and 1800, ultimately reflects the books owned by members of the generation of Abraham Blussé Sr, who, had he lived in The Hague, would have died eight years too late to be included in the survey.¹²⁵

However, the difference in results may also be connected to a problem of sources in the reconstruction of the Blussé list. The most important available sources for the first period, apart from Arrenberg's system and a few bibliographies, were the *Boekzaal der geleerde weereld* (The bookroom of the learned world), a far more theologically-minded literary review than *Vaderlandsche letteroefeningen* (National literary exercises) that did not start, however, until 1761, and the deed of transfer for the publishing house in 1771, in which only the current titles are mentioned. It is very likely that in this deed of transfer the theological titles—which after all were the most

¹²³ For a graphic representation of the catalogue expansion of A. Blussé & Son see appendix I.

¹²⁴ These only concern inventories of which more than fifty percent of the titles are known. De Kruif, *Liefhebbers en gewoontelezers*, 163.

¹²⁵ On this see De Kruif, *Liefhebbers en gewoontelezers*, 80-86. The author points to the fact that it is likely that new literary trends would first have appealed to young people, which would greatly have delayed registered changes in property inventories (*Ibid.*, 81). After checking this by means of a number of random sample surveys, it appeared that the average age of people in De Kruif's research population was eight years higher than all deceased adults listed in the burial register (*Ibid.*, 86).

enduring part of the list—are overrepresented. Any difference in personality between father and son Blussé probably did not play a significant role in the diminishing proportion of religious books. This could simply have been due to the fact that—as shown earlier—Abraham Blussé Sr continued to play an active role in the publishing house, just as Pieter Blussé did after he had passed the bookshop on to his namesake. In addition, the intense contact that has been observed between the different generations in the Blussé family, the strong control they exercised in raising their children with a largely pre-programmed schedule and reading list—and choice of schools, preferably those which Pieter Blussé Sr had attended himself—provided a certain continuity in personality structure. Differences in world-view and attitude will also have influenced the structure of the list, but that is all to the good. After all, the Blussés would have been very bad publishers if, living at a time when ideas were undergoing rapid change, they had remained immune to such changes.

The fact that religion was less prominent in the list does not mean that the production of theological titles fell in equal measure. In absolute numbers the production actually rose from 90 volume titles in 1745-70 to 190 volume titles between 1798 and 1830. The decrease, therefore, is only proportional: in terms of the total increase in production—from 208 volume titles in the first period to 780 in the third—theology lagged behind. Considering the other trends in the list, it would be very tempting to ignore the percentages and to assail the reader with growing stacks of books. Using this approach, it would even be possible to finally see the 'rising novel' in terms of numbers. The category of literature rose in the three periods from 23 to 42 to 83 copies. But if we look at percentages there is no change at all: 11% in 1745-70, 10% in 1771-97 and 11% again in 1798-1830. However, within the group of literary titles the sub-category of novels and stories rose proportionally as well after 1798. On the basis of the figures it would be entirely accurate to claim that the production of novels in the period 1771-98 was reduced by half when compared with the previous period, only to skyrocket after 1798 when the figures tripled. But these findings become far less spectacular when we take a critical look behind the scenes. The number of copies involved is so low that one inaccurate attribution of a multi-volume title can tip the scales drastically. In the period before 1771 only 3%—six volume titles—of the total list consisted of novels and stories. In 1771-97, when Pieter Blussé Sr was in charge, this dropped to as low as 1.7%—seven volume titles—only to rise to 4.6% in the period 1798-1830—37 volume titles. This increase would have been even more striking if the

sixteen-volume catalogue title purchased by Blussé in around 1799 *Zedelijke verhalen van D'Arnaud, Mercier en anderen* (Moral Tales by D'Arnaud, Mercier and others) had not been assigned to the sub-category 'miscellany' but instead, on perhaps equally solid grounds, had been categorised under novels and stories. So if Blussé had purchased the title a year earlier, the picture would have shown a new swing: in that case there would have been an indication of a steady growth in the number of novels and stories.¹²⁶

The chance of such distortions would have been smaller if it had been possible to count the titles only once in the calculation, apart from the number of volumes they comprised. But because multi-volume works were not equally spread over all the genres (works of geography, history and physics were particularly voluminous), that decision would have given rise to new and serious distortions. The twenty-two page *Lykreden ter gedagtenis van het zalig afsterven van ... Lavillette* would have as much weight in the list analysis as De la Porte's thirty-two-volume *De nieuwe reisiger*. The proportion of geographical and historical works would make up not 16% but 10% of the total production in the first period. The second period would be hardest hit: not 21% but 9%. The last period would be least affected: the proportion would have been 14% instead of 15%. These last figures—the minor distortion in the period after 1797—is actually far more revealing than the results of the study of possible shifts in the proportion of works of history and geography in the Blussé list. The most that can be said is that the rising interest in these genres that is postulated in the secondary literature is not reflected in the Blussé list. Indeed, the three periods taken together show a slight decrease from 16% to 15%.

On the other hand, the fact that it makes little difference whether these genres are calculated by individual volumes or by title for the period after 1797 does reveal a broader trend. In the Blussé list the number of multi-volume works drops from 30% in the years before 1798 to 11% in the years

¹²⁶ A quantitative approach to historical readership research—whether by means of catalogue analysis or sales figures in books of clients—is very problematic due to the narrow basis on which judgments must be made. Illustrative of this are Brouwer's struggles in establishing a possible order for ranking the best sold titles at T'ijl's eighteenth-century bookshop. He finds that 'the vast majority of the titles were not purchased by more than one or two buyers', which would make Wagenaar's *Vaderlandsche historie*, with sales to thirteen customers, a relative bestseller (Brouwer, *Lezen en schrijven*, 73, 77). On account of these types of problems, he not only chose to present his research results as transparently as possible but he also constantly kept them in perspective. It is thanks to the difficult task Brouwer set himself—writing a readable book without dodging the possible complications—that we now have a thorough study to build on, unhindered by hard conclusions made on the basis of flimsy material.

thereafter. If this phenomenon can be shown to apply to other eighteenth-century publishers, it might explain why historians have been given the impression that the production of geographical and historical works rose after 1800. After all, if calculations are involved, then they are based on the number of titles and not on the number of volumes. If a publisher were to switch from large, multi-volume works to a larger number of one- or two-volume titles, such calculations could create the illusion that his production had increased even though the level of his investment had actually undergone a drastic decline.

This 'exodus' of titles, at least in the Blussé list, is not only cause for a few methodological comments. It might also indicate a change in the public's reading habits. Earlier it was suggested that internal developments within the book trade (such as the improvement of distribution methods that enabled speedier delivery of new titles) may have been linked to a modernisation of readers' interests.¹²⁷ The same tendency could account for the decrease in multi-volume productions. It was difficult to combine the publication of voluminous works—which took years to complete, if only because of the technological limitations of that age—with the need to satisfy the constant desire of the reading public for 'something new and different'. This can be illustrated by De Félice's letter to Holtrop, in which he complains that the tempo at which the volumes of his encyclopaedia were being issued was far slower than the speed at which his subscribers were pulling out.¹²⁸ It is possible that by the end of the eighteenth century the advantages of customer loyalty, which the publication of multi-volume works over long periods provided, no longer outweighed the disadvantages. As explained earlier, this is probably also why Blussé did not publish his series on industry as an encyclopaedia or a multi-volume work but as a series consisting of autonomous volumes. The rise of such types of series at the end of the eighteenth century as observed by Kuitert may be connected to the need for publishers to gain customer loyalty without overtaxing their patience.¹²⁹ With the turbulent political developments that took place in the last decades of the eighteenth century, it is not difficult to imagine the older geographical and historical works becoming outdated overnight, or the public as well as the publishing establishment developing a critical attitude towards ideologically tinted reference books in particular.

¹²⁷ See Chapter Two.

¹²⁸ See Chapter Four.

¹²⁹ L. Kuitert, *Het ene boek in vele delen* (Amsterdam 1993) 33–54.

Subscribing to works like these, certainly if it took years to produce them, was not without risk. Indeed, today's truth could be outdated by tomorrow. This may explain why, after a number of publishers had sniffed out a market for a Dutch encyclopaedia all at the same time in 1785, it would take another century before the first real encyclopaedia of Dutch origin would see the light of day. Unlike the reference work that Holtrop had envisaged and the dictionary that Chalmot had just managed to get on the market, this encyclopaedia was to be practical and objective. Holtrop's idea was to produce an engaged, enlightened encyclopaedia based on the Diderot model. Even if such a project had been feasible in the small market for Dutch publications that existed at the time, with the political upheavals that were brewing it may not have come too early but too late.

The emergence of handbooks in the Blussé list in the 1780s also suggests a shift in interest but cannot be classified in any of the genres developed for this purpose. If we sidestep this problem and use Brouwer's criterion—the presence of the term 'handbook' or 'manual' in the title—then we arrive at one handbook for the period before 1771, five handbooks between 1771 and 1806, and twenty handbooks between 1807 and 30.¹³⁰ If we search the lists title by title, however, and make room for books such as *Praktisynwoordenboekjes* (Practical dictionary), *Konst om wonden te schouwen* (The art of studying wounds) and *Regt gebruik der uurwerken* (The correct use of clocks), we observe a far earlier increase: in the period before 1771 Blussé then produced four handbooks, from 1771 to 1781 also four, from 1781 to 1797 there were thirty and from 1798 to 1830 the number rises to forty. The most striking shift in the period after 1800 is evidently not so much the increase in the number of handbooks—that had already started—as the emergence of the term 'handbook' and 'manual' on the title page. Although to a lesser extent than in the case of novels, the rise of this 'genre' is less revolutionary when calculated in terms of percentages: 1% in the period that Abraham Blussé Sr was at the helm, 8% in the period that Pieter Blussé Sr held the reins, and even a drop to 5% during the period when his sons increasingly began to make their mark on the publishing house. This observation agrees with Brouwer's conclusion that the true explosion in the production of handbooks must be placed in the period after 1850.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Compare Grabner, *Brieven over de Vereenigde Nederlanden* II, 413. He maintains that the popularity of works dealing with (home) economics greatly increased shortly before the Patriot period, after which it decreased for a while, and then increased enormously in the 1790s.

¹³¹ Brouwer, *Lezen en schrijven*, 267.

Remarkably little change took place for most of the genres in the list. Even the category of children's books shows a rise of only 1%—from 6% in the period before 1771 to 7% in the period after 1806—with only one exception: school books. The proportion of school books in the total list increased from 1% in the first period to 14% in the last. This will come as no surprise to anyone with any knowledge of the educational reforms that took place at the beginning of the nineteenth century, to which Abraham Blussé Jr would have contributed in fact in his role as a school inspector. The other findings mainly show a considerable lack of movement—or perhaps an unwillingness to be reduced into genre categories. For this reason, and due to the precariousness of drawing general conclusions on the basis of a single list whose reliability keeps pace with the rise in production, which means considerable distortions can appear as a result of one incorrect attribution (Buffon's production history clearly shows that such mistakes cannot be avoided), it makes more sense not to dwell too long on this lack of movement.¹³² It should be clear that a comparison of print run figures per genre offers a much more direct opening for making pronouncements about the preferences of 'the reading public'. The fact that this opening has not yet been tested has nothing to do with a possible blind spot among scholars investigating the reading culture but is connected with a problem of sources.

Print Run Figures

This time it is not owing to traditional family documentation that an alternative source has emerged to give us an impression of the popularity of a number of genres in around 1800. Thanks to the decision of a Dordrecht archivist to move to the building that was once the printery of the Blussé family, and to his opening doors that had been locked to others, a unique source was unearthed: the compositors' ledger from the printery for the years 1797-1818, in which the print runs were recorded for a great many titles.¹³³

¹³² Apart from any possible development in genres, the list was also analyzed in terms of possible changes in the origins of translated works. In the period before 1771, 44.5% of the catalogue consisted of translations, 17% of which were translations from the French, 11% from the German and 16% from the English. In the period 1771 to 1806 the percentage of translations fell to 27%, 15.6% of which were from the French, 7.6% from the German and 4% from the English. The period 1807 to 30 shows a rise once more in the percentage of translated work to 35%, 12% of which were from the French, 13% from the German and 9% from the English.

¹³³ With thanks to Emil Havers, who found a door inside a cupboard in his house, behind which part of Adolph Blussé's printery administration was literally gathering mould.



53. Grotekerksplein 5 c. 1900. Photographic print of the original glass negative. From 1817 onwards these were the premises of the printing establishment of A. Blussé & Son and the newspaper, the *Dordrechtse Courant*, they published. The building is still intact, and several years ago Blussé's ledgers were found here in a concealed cupboard. National Library Dordrecht.

Up until now only a few scattered data were known concerning the print run figures in this period, which Dongelman has called the 'problem child' in many studies on publishing and the book trade.¹³⁴ A ledger from a book printing house dating to around 1800 in which the print run figures for the published works were systematically recorded had never been found in the Netherlands before.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ B.P.M. Dongelmans, 'De betekenis van oplage', *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse boekgeschiedenis* 1 (1994) 181-203, 181. See also Mijnhardt, 'De Nederlandse verlichting nagerekend', 171-85.

¹³⁵ With thanks to Hannie van Goïnga, who advised me in calculating the print run figures on the basis of these ledgers. The ledgers from the Enschedé printing office, a firm that kept well away from book production, have been preserved. The Luchtman archive also contains printers' ledgers. The publishing house attached to this printing office, however, was active at the top end of the book market for the most part (on this Van Eeghen, *De Amsterdamse boekhandel* V-I, 136).

The first systematic and therefore frequently consulted source is the *Bibliographie de l'Empire français*. However, this booklist only contains the print run figures for the years 1812 to 1813. In those years Dutch publishers were required to hand over their print run figures to the French government, after which they were published in the *Bibliographie*. The problem with this source is not only the brief duration of a project so useful to book history, but also the years themselves: 1812 to 1813 marked the lowest ebb of the economic recession that characterised this period, partly thanks to the same French government. Based on this fact it has always been assumed that the print run figures published in the *Bibliographie* were lower than those in previous and subsequent years. But even on the basis of these modest but well-documented two years, estimates can differ, as we see when we compare Huygens's figures with those of Mijnhardt. The latter paints the more optimistic picture: 'novels, an average of 650 copies; specialised scientific works, 350 copies; poetry, 500-1,000 copies; popular scientific works, history and travel stories, usually 1,000 or more. Only chap-books with striking titles like *De nieuwe boeren studeerkamer* (The new farmer's study) and *Schacubak en de Barmecide*'¹³⁶ were printed in runs up to 10,000 and more. Huygens gives figures for a few other genres as well and arrives at the following totals, possibly using different classification criteria or a bit of speculation: 'Legal works, an average of 1,000 copies; historical works, 700; travel stories, 800; and novels, 750. Periodicals such as *Boekzaal* and the *Letteroefeningen* reached similar figures or slightly higher'.¹³⁷ He suggests another reason why the print run figures published in the *Bibliography* might show a downward bias: the publishers were compelled to report the results to the tax authorities.¹³⁸

Blussé's ledgers confirms this last hypothesis. The figures were indeed tampered with, at least by Adolph Blussé. Whereas in other years he did provide the print run figures for most of his printed work, in the years 1812-13 these numbers are conspicuous by their absence. A few were noted down in the ledgers later, in 1814, when the French were long gone. Whether there was a decrease in print runs during this period of recession, as has been suggested, is difficult to ascertain. If we compare the average print run figures per genre from Blussé's list for other years with averages estimated

¹³⁶ Mijnhardt, 'De Nederlandse Verlichting nagerekend', 172.

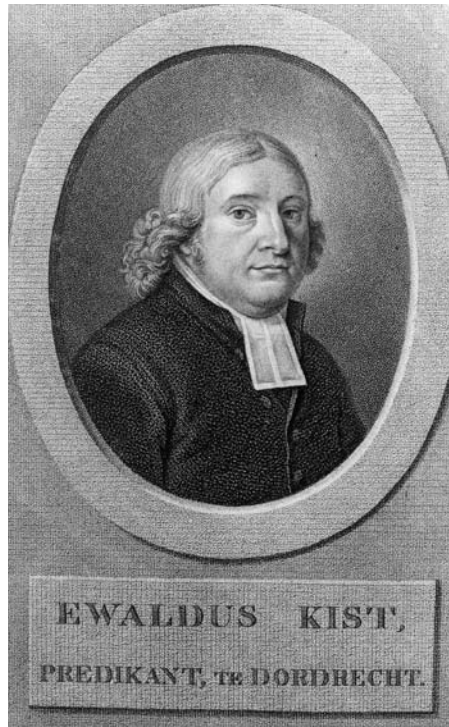
¹³⁷ G.W. Huygens, *De Nederlandse auteur en zijn publiek. Een sociologisch-literaire studie over de ontwikkeling van het letterkundig leven in Nederland sedert de 18e eeuw* (Amsterdam 1944) 56.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

by Huygens and Mijnhardt for 1812-1813, it makes the research into the ledgers look less like revelations of large-scale fraud and more like a bit of nibbling at the edges. Huygens's estimated print run for history books (700) and travel stories (800), and certainly Mijnhardt's estimates (1,000 or more for both categories), is even higher than the average print run that Blussé reported for both genres. The average print figure for historical works from his list amounts to 761 copies, and those of geographical works and travel stories to 585 copies. Novels and stories were also printed with more caution than earlier estimates suggested: 572 copies per print run as opposed to 750 in Huygens's and 650 in Mijnhardt's calculations. The fact that poetry comes off worst at Blussé's—252 copies—as opposed to from 500 to 1,000 in Mijnhardt's estimates, may be connected to Abraham Blussé Sr's great productivity in this area. Although the buyers at Tijl's bookshop in Zwolle seem to have been more interested in 'jolly poets' than in literature with a capital 'L', Abraham's occasional poetry on the Blussé list scores very low with a print run of around 100 copies, which of course has the effect of pushing down the average. Perhaps Abraham Blussé Sr wasn't 'jolly' enough. Until his death in 1808 he kept Adolph's presses active with his occasional poetry, the sort of printing that went no farther than the confines of Dordrecht and therefore never made it into the *Bibliographie*. Mijnhardt's estimate of the print run figures for popular scientific works—1,000 or more—was right on target in the case of Blussé. The print run for philosophy and law was 1,000 copies, and that of the natural sciences was 1,027. Huygens's estimate of the print run figures for periodicals—800 copies or more—seems way off the mark, at least when compared with those of Blussé, which was 1,967—hardly what can be called an average. This refers to only one 'periodical' printed in varying runs: *Bijvoegsel tot het Staatsblad van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* (Supplement to the statute book of the Kingdom of the Netherlands), hardly an ordinary publication for an ordinary public. For anyone who might be tempted to throw in the towel after these—once again—disappointing figures and to relegate the thesis of the readers' revolution to the realm of fable once and for all: there is still hope, or at least there was a good deal more hope to be derived from the ledgers.¹³⁹

Most of the genres which, on the basis of Blussé's print runs, can be assumed to have commanded a large market, are not included in the above-

¹³⁹ For a graphic depiction of the average print numbers per genre in the Blussé catalogue see appendix II.



54. Portrait of the popular Dordrecht clergyman Ewaldus Kist (1762-1822), engraved by W. van Senus to a design by H.W. Caspari. Photograph Iconographic Bureau, The Hague.

mentioned estimates. And we are not talking here about the likes of *Schacubak en de Barmecide*. Dictionaries were printed in an average print run of 2,455, almanacs in a print run of 5,609, the category Bibles/ hymns/ service books scored even higher with 5,636, while devotional literature at 1,052 and collected sermons at 788 reached nowhere near these levels. Juridical works and laws were printed at an average run of 1,095, while literary miscellany, at an average of 733, did better than novels, books dealing with trades and crafts scored an average of 1,116, school books 1,336 and children's books 1,185.

If we focus on individual titles in the ledgers then the following books emerge as best-sellers on the Blussé list: *Cantiques pour le culte public*, the new French hymnbook for the Walloon church from 1803, topped the list at 21,775 copies. It should be noted that this work was published in a great many different formats and printed on paper of varying quality, the total sum of which constitutes the print run figure, which holds for the other

titles too.¹⁴⁰ This incredibly large number of copies is indicative of a wide distribution area where less well-off groups of purchasers were also served, but it might also suggest that individual buyers purchased the hymns in more than one format: a large expensive version for use in the home, for example, and a small, lightweight edition to take to church.

Right on the heels of the Walloon hymns was the *Dordrechtsche almanak*, a title that enriched the list after the merger with Van Braam in 1818. It was published in a print run of 18,000. This was followed by a catalogue of books from 1798 with a print run of 6,000, after which came J. Holtrop and E. Zeydelaar's adapted, revised version of the French-Dutch and Dutch-French dictionary by Marin, of which 5,000 copies were reprinted, not surprisingly in the period 1810-1811. In the following year this dictionary was again reprinted: 2,500 copies of the French-Dutch volume and 4,000 of the Dutch-French volume.¹⁴¹ From this one might conclude that during the French annexation Dutch people were more concerned with being understood than with understanding what was being said. As far as the English were concerned it was apparently exactly the opposite, at least if we are to take seriously the text of an advertisement that Holtrop and Blussé publicised in 1789. In it they announced the first English-Dutch volume of John Holtrop's two-volume work *A new English and Dutch dictionary* with the promise that 'the Dutch-English volume... will appear as soon as possible and will be delivered to the buyers of this volume free of charge'. To judge from the print run of an English textbook there was great interest in the language of the neighbours overseas, especially after the signing of the Peace of Amiens on 27 March 1802 when trade with England was decontrolled. In August 1802 the first quires were printed of *The English grammar enlarged and explained in Dutch*, published by Blussé and Holtrop in partnership in 1804 in a print run of 3,000.¹⁴² Earlier editions of this textbook,

¹⁴⁰ The work was printed in different sizes and on different qualities of paper. The type was left in the frames for a long time so later on extra copies could be printed from the same type. The print run has been calculated on the basis of all sizes and print runs of the separate volumes, added together.

¹⁴¹ Reprinted in 1818 in a print run of 1,100.

¹⁴² This textbook was sold to fourteen customers at Van Benthem's Middelburg bookshop in the period 1807-09, most being sold in 1809. The popularity of this textbook in Middelburg in that particular year must have been connected with the English invasion of Walcheren in 1809. Apparently this led to a widespread need to acquire a basic grasp of English. Among the buyers of *The English grammar* were not only members of the upper middle class but also a few tradespeople: a tailor, a tobacco, tea and spirits merchant, and a seller of cloth and lace. With thanks to Gerard Schulte Nordholt, Joost Kloek and Wijnand Mijnhart.

originally compiled by John Holtrop, were published with supplements and revisions by the English clergyman B.C. Sowden in 1780 and 1791. After both publishers had put two editions of Holtrop's *Dictionary* on the market in 1789 and 1801, Blussé thought the time was ripe in 1807 for a modernised reprint of Janson's much cheaper pocket English dictionary. The first quires of this small edition, purchased from another publisher in 1801, were reprinted in November 1807 in a print run 1,500. In 1819 there was a reprint of the same number of copies.

There was greater variety in the print runs for the 'collected sermons' genre than for the dictionary genre. The average of 788 had many exceptions below that amount, such as the sermons of the Lutheran minister Tissel, the clergyman who had so warmly recommended Blussé's *Am-bachten* to the *Oeconomische Tak* (Economic Branch), which only ran to between 200 and 400 copies. The *Redevoering over de ongenoegzaamheid van de rede* (Oration upon the insufficiency of the reason) by the Zeeland minister J. Renier, written for pupils of the Latin School in Veere, was issued in a print run of 400 copies. There are a few upward exceptions, however. These were all compilations of sermons by the conservative Dordrecht preacher Ewaldus Kist, enormously popular throughout the country on account of his talent as an orator.¹⁴³ Schotel describes him as 'one of the most well-loved writers in the Netherlands' whose death in 1822 was cause for profound sorrow in Dordrecht: 'weeping people gazed upon his house, hundreds accompanied his body to the grave. The sobs of the city echoed through the sanctuaries'.¹⁴⁴ Representatives of the Blussé family must have walked among these mourners.¹⁴⁵ In terms of numbers of print runs, Kist stands out as one of the star Blussé authors. Most of his work was printed in runs of 1,100, 1,500 and even 2,000 for a sermon in 1811. We see little of the economic recession of that year in this last print run, although it is reflected in the choice of subject: *Ruth in vier leerredenen, vooral tot vertroosting en bestuur van ongelukkige huisgezinnen en familiën* (Ruth in four lectures, especially for the consolation and guidance of unhappy households and families).

¹⁴³ J.P. de Bie and J. Loosjes, *Biographisch woordenboek van protestantsche godgeleerden in Nederland* (6 vols.; The Hague 1903-49) IV, 762-68; G.D.J. Schotel, *Kerkelijk Dordrecht: eene bijdrage tot de geschiedenis der vaderlandsche Hervormde Kerk, sedert het jaar 1572* (2 vols.; Utrecht/Dordrecht 1841-45) II, 627-98.

¹⁴⁴ Schotel, *Kerkelijk Dordrecht* II, 657.

¹⁴⁵ In the Blussé family archive there is still a printed eulogy that was given by J.H. Holle and written in response to this death, with a hand-written dedication by the author that reads 'For brother A. Blussé' (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 42).

In the 'devotional works' category it is once again Kist who is responsible for the bestseller in the list. His *Beoefenigsleer, of de kennis der middelen om als een waar leerling van Jesus Christus getroost en heilig te leven* (Practical instruction, or knowledge of how to live a calm and holy life as a true disciple of Jesus Christ) was reprinted in 1804 in a print run of 2,200, in 1809 in a print run of 1,500 and in 1814 in a print run of 3,250—large and small octavo counted together. This means that in ten years' time Blussé must have put at least 6,950 copies of this work on the market. The final figure must have been much higher, given the fact that he published an abridged version 'for those of limited means' in 1812, the year in which print run figures are almost entirely lacking. This work was considered to be so useful for everyday Christian practice that it was reprinted again in 1834 and distributed for free by Christian charities.¹⁴⁶

The mild-mannered yet fairly orthodox clergyman Kist is certainly not the sort of best-selling author one would envisage in an attempt to salvage something of the readers' revolution thesis. The next bestseller in the category of devotional works shows no trace of the spirit of Enlightenment at all. The book concerned is a reprint of the orthodox Reformed work by Petrus Nahuijs dating back to the seventeenth century, *Kort begrip der christelijke religie* (Brief synopsis of the Christian religion), of which 2,250 copies were printed in 1807. It is debatable whether it was indeed a best-seller, however, or a miscalculation on the part of the publisher, or—as has been suggested—a hobbyhorse of Abraham Blussé Sr. After his death in 1808 this work was auctioned along with some others, and it certainly performed as if it were a bestseller. Gracing the auction financial statement is the notation that 473 'Nahuisen' were sold. *Kort begrip der christelijke religie voor eenvoudigen* (Brief synopsis of the Christian religion for the common people) by the clergyman A. Hellenbroek, also of the seventeenth century, had been reprinted for the twenty-fourth time in 1797 and sold equally well at this auction. In one fell swoop the Blussé list was 347 copies lighter. Unfortunately we have no information on how many copies were left, although we do have a record of the numbers of copies printed in 1797: 2,000.

¹⁴⁶ These high print numbers correspond to the sales figures for this title sold by the Middelburg bookseller Van Benthem in the period 1807-09. Forty-two copies were sold for a total sum of 174 guilders and 20 stivers. With only a few exceptions, the customers all belonged to the elite or the upper middle classes, which must have been connected to the high purchase price: from 4 to 9 guilders a volume, depending on the way the book was bound.

Blussé did not limit himself to the orthodox market segment, however. He also published a great many works (including sermons) by one of Kist's colleagues in Dordrecht, the enlightened Patriot clergyman and member of the first and second National Assembly, Paulus Bosveld. Only two print run figures are known for his works. Bosveld's *Waarheid der opstanding* (Truth of the resurrection) appeared in 1798 in a print run of 600, and his *Verklaring van de brieven aan de Thessalonikers* (Exposition of the letters to the Thessalonians) of 1803 in a print run of 500.

It is equally unsurprising that the *Keizerlijk decreet, behelzende een algemeen reglement voor de organisatie der departementen van Holland* (Imperial decree, including a general ruling regarding the organisation of the departments of Holland), issued in 1811, far exceeds other publications in the category of juridical works and laws with a print run of 3,000. The average print run for this category—1,095—is low due to the number of laws of only local or very temporary importance. Within this category—not coincidentally the third most popular category among private customers at Van Benthem's Middelburg bookshop in around 1808 after theology, devotional literature and schoolbooks¹⁴⁷—large profits could be made in return for relatively low investments. Print runs of 1,500 to 2,000 were more the rule than the exception. The same holds for the category of school books, which took second place among Van Benthem's top eighteen with 14.4% of sales. If we try to estimate the print run figures for a number of titles in this genre, then the figures become even more impressive. This is well illustrated by *Nuttige en vermakelijke school tot onderwijs van kinderen* (Useful and pleasant lessons for the education of children), which Blussé purchased in 1794 from another publisher.¹⁴⁸ This work, recommended on the official booklist for primary schools, was reprinted five times before 1818, each time in editions of 2,000 copies.

Durability as trademark

In the light of such print run figures it is scarcely surprising that the Blussé list in the period 1798-1830 largely consisted of theological and juridical books, schoolbooks and dictionaries, together making up 52% of their production. But what is even more astonishing is that the firm also took the trouble to publish other genres. Although the print runs within each

¹⁴⁷ Eleven percent of the allocation. Kloek and Mijnhardt, *Leescultuur in Middelburg*, 62.

¹⁴⁸ He took it over from Van Riemsdijk and Van Bronkhorst from Bergen op Zoom.

genre were small, 26% of his list still consisted of literary works (with or without a capital 'L'), historical and geographical literature. There must have been a number of reasons for this.

In the first place, investing in many different genres was a way of spreading the risk—a kind of business practice that was not unusual for Pieter, considering his other investments and strategies, and certainly did him no harm. It should also be kept in mind that the price of paper in those days was a far greater cost factor in the production of books than it is today, making it relatively less expensive for publishers of the period to print small runs of everything instead of putting all their money on a few bestsellers. This is certainly true of translations for which they had paid for neither copyright nor author's fees, which was true of a considerable portion of the works from the above-mentioned categories in the Blussé list. However, the most important reason for engaging in this form of widespread investment is so obvious that it is inclined to be overlooked. The opportunity to publish, say, a new rhymed version of the hymnal for the Walloon church—which ran to 21,775 copies in 1803 and was the undisputed number one in Blussé's top ten for print runs—did not happen every year, of course. The new rhymed version of the hymnal of the strict Reformed church, which was published by Allart and about which more is known, was only released for publication in 1807 after years of discussion.¹⁴⁹ There are always denominations in the Netherlands that do not accept this new rhymed version of the Psalms and prefer to use the old 1773 version in their church services.

So it is not surprising that Blussé made every effort to secure the right to publish the Walloon *Cantiques*, nor that he put forward his son Adolph to do the printing. He was even willing to indulge in corporate spying. It is known that the copyright for *Evangelische gezangen* (the hymnal of the strict Reformed church) was auctioned after Allart's death for more than 100,000 guilders.¹⁵⁰ The family archive still contain a lengthy exchange of letters between Abraham Jr and Pieter Sr dating back to the period when the contract for the *Cantiques* had not yet been signed, and information was being diligently gathered on which printers owned the best supply of type fonts and musical notes. 'J. Altheer of Utrecht has notes made by Enschede. NB Fleischman has very good fonts, obtained in 1793.' One of Adolph's printer's apprentices acted as informer: 'According to the appren-

¹⁴⁹ On this see Bosch, *En nooit meer oude psalmen zingen*.

¹⁵⁰ Bosch, *En nooit meer oude psalmen zingen*, 322, note 40.

tice Herdingh & Du Mortier do not have notes. No notes have been cast for the past sixteen years.¹⁵¹ It was with some relief that Pieter Sr was able to report the following to his oldest son on 10 July 1801: 'Adolf was notified today by Enschede that his Dess[endiaa]n will arrive at the end of Aug[ust]—at any rate, it should be considered a principal component and will not be available in a brand-new anywhere else. Adieu, your father.'¹⁵² A good, clear, solid font and high-quality musical notes was obviously of great importance for this publication, considering the size of the print runs as mentioned above. The printed end-product itself also had to withstand intensive use.¹⁵³

The *Waalische gezangen* (Walloon Hymnal) is an outstanding example of the type of printed matter with an extremely long life-cycle which satisfied any longing for further purchases ('A book? I already have one.'). According to De Kruif, the market for such publications had reached its saturation point by the second half of the eighteenth century.¹⁵⁴ Such a period of stagnation, it can be assumed, was immediately offset by the introduction of a new rhymed version of the Psalms or, in the case of Michaelis's *Nieuwe overzetting*, a new translation of the Bible. There can be no doubt that the internal idiosyncrasies of book production had a certain influence on the nature of the cultural production and with that of the cultural horizon. It would be going too far, however, to regard a new and more enlightened Bible translation as the result of an eighteenth-century publisher's attempt to boost stagnating sales through product differentiation.

Dictionaries and law books—another mainstay of Blussé's publishing firm—are also among the enduring books to be found in most eighteenth-century bookcases. Those who bought them rarely purchased another, unless a considerably improved new edition was issued, preferably with a significant number of new entries. Blussé tried this tactic on a number of occasions and, considering the print runs, with some success. It had its limits, of course, as we see from the long periods of time between the various reprints. So when publishing dictionaries, Blussé used a strategy

¹⁵¹ In a scribbled note folded into a letter from Pieter Blussé Sr dated 9 July 1801 (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 45).

¹⁵² Letter dated 10 July 1807 (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 45).

¹⁵³ Compare Bosch, *En nooit meer oude psalmen zingen*, 67. He concluded from the large sum of money for which the *Evangelische gezangen* was auctioned in 1816 that the market for this work remained stable.

¹⁵⁴ De Kruif, *Liefhebbers en gewoontelezers*, 135-45. This theory is briefly examined in Chapter Two.

that De Kruif called 'product differentiation' in order to tap new markets with cheaper editions.¹⁵⁵ He tried this with books like Janson's *Zakwoordenboek voor de Engelse taal* (English pocket dictionary), but neither this work nor Holtrop's *New English and Dutch Dictionary* were ready for a reprint until some ten years later.

An exception must be made for law books: during the French years, and certainly during the Napoleonic period, they were constantly in need of replacement. As we have seen, Blussé avidly tried to meet this newly created need. But there was a limit to this type of growth, even for law books. The number of legal texts to be published was dictated by the number of new laws passed. There was a large number of them but the list was not endless. Once the public had bought the text of the new law, perhaps with an explanation, summary and index—possible cravings that Blussé eagerly supplied—there would have been no need for another edition of the same text. Finally it must be remembered that there was no shortage of competitors. The fact that Blussé was not the only publisher who had discovered this market is evident from a conflict in 1811 between the Blussé firm and Allart that was battled out at a high level—with King Louis Bonaparte as mediator—on the right to publish the *Manuel des justices de paix*.¹⁵⁶

Blussé may have been the first to announce the work in the newspapers, but Allart was much further along in the printing process. Needless to say, Louis Bonaparte was not very familiar with a number of Dutch laws and practices, which in the eyes of legally-minded Europeans were fairly exotic. The Dutch custom of being allowed to claim copyright through advertisements, which Abraham Blussé Jr explained to the king in person, was regarded by Louis as curious, local folklore:

He summoned me, as it were, in order to show him something in Dutch law, a volume that could not possibly exist in even the smallest country. I then had to produce a copy of the 1803 Publication, and, as if he understood some of the Dutch, he followed as I read the text word by word. Having first read a couple of lines from the section that preceded the one I was to deal with, in French words, he seemed to gloat with triumph because the argument was not sound.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 136.

¹⁵⁶ Blussé found another fierce competitor for the publication of law books in the Rotterdam publisher Immerzeel & Cie. On this see Dongelmans, *Johannes Immerzeel junior*, 211-13.

¹⁵⁷ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 43, letter from Abraham Blussé Jr to Adolph Blussé dated 10 December 1810.

After Louis had changed his mind on the copyright issue a number of times, he eventually decided

that it was a kind of folly to base copyright today on Dutch law, considering how much that would entail. We were permitted to continue with our translation, but so was Allart, with an authenticated publication in the two languages. And his counsel was—and he had no other to offer—that we should reach an understanding with each other.¹⁵⁸

Johannes Allart and Abraham Blussé Jr did indeed achieve a compromise: the Blussé firm would halt production in exchange for damages, to be paid by Allart.¹⁵⁹ After the Blussés had collected the money, Adolph, ignoring his father's objections, launched a competitive, unauthorised work with a different title.¹⁶⁰ The *Manuel des justices de paix*, the title that Allart continued to use, was renamed *Nouveau manuel-pratique* at Blussé's. Unlike Pieter, the younger Blussé generation had no scruples about conducting business this way. Abraham Jr underlines this once again in a letter to Adolph:

As for father's objection, in order to assess this properly I would have to be better informed concerning the oral and written negotiations with Allart & Immerzeel. If you have sold him all your rights for the *Manuel des Justices de paix par M. Levasseur*, then you are equally entitled, as I understand it, to produce your manual by M... alongside that by him, just as Allart is competing with our *Dictionnaire Portatif* by Marin with his *Dictionnaire Portatif* by¹⁶¹

With those final ellipses Abraham would have been referring to the *Nouveau dictionnaire portatif des langages françaises et hollandaises* by G.N. Landré and P. Weiland, which Allart had recently put in the market, in 1810, and which would have been competition for Blussé's bestseller, Marin's *Dictionnaire portatif*, reprinted in that same year in a print run of 5,000. 'M' was probably the translator of Blussé's 1811 *Nieuwe praktikaal handboek voor vrederegters* (New practical handbook for justices of the peace), L.C. Mazel, who in the end did not win the commission. That honour fell to the then twenty-year-old A.J. van der Aa, who later in his life became famous as the author of the twenty-one-volume *Biographisch woordenboek* (Biographical

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., letter dated 12 December 1810.

¹⁵⁹ This is revealed in the same letter. See previous note.

¹⁶⁰ This approach, and the fact that Pieter Blussé Sr objected to it, emerges from a letter from Abraham Blussé Jr to Adolph Blussé dated 12 October 1811 (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 43).

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

dictionary) and the thirteen-volume *Aardrijkskundig woordenboek der Nederlanden* (Geographical dictionary of the Netherlands). It is this author who received the first three sheets of the handbook from Abraham Jr in October 1811: 'Be assured that more will swiftly follow. Otherwise the translator might begin to think he has no need to hurry'.¹⁶² In the Napoleonic period the production of law books had to be carried out at high speed due to the cutthroat competition. Judging by the frequent appeals Abraham Jr made to his brother to speed up, we can conclude that haste was not Adolph's forte. The way Abraham saw it, Adolph's tardiness was to blame for their having to abandon the preferential printing of the *Handboek* to Allart:

As far as rapidity is concerned, it is unfortunate that, for whatever the cause or concurrence of circumstances and lack of adequate assistance, which resulted in excessive delay from our side, we have thereby missed an excellent opportunity. This work should have been ready in four, even five months, no matter who the translator and printer, and then it would have been done on time. This is what Allart indicated to me in no uncertain terms, quite understandably and quite rightfully, because he is so active.¹⁶³

We learn from our mistakes. The official edition of the *Wetboek van de registratie, het zegel, de rechten der griffie en van de hypothecken* (Lawbook concerning registration, seals, petition rights and property mortgages), published by Blussé, was printed in 1812 by the Amsterdam printer G. van Tyen.¹⁶⁴

Adolph will not have regretted the temporary disruption in the Blussé list caused by the production of law books and law manuals. The remaining mainstays of the list—the dictionaries, theological works and school textbooks—did not have to be produced under such time constraints and could therefore, without exception, be entrusted to the presses in Dordrecht. It was considered advisable, however, in view of Louis Bonaparte's lenient views on copyright, to apply for a privilege for Marin's *Dictionnaire portatif* immediately, which for safety's sake was dedicated to the prefect De Stassart: 'Tell father that I have already submitted a request to have our Dict[ionnaire] Portatif placed under the protection of the French laws, in

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ This printer is mentioned in the *Bibliographie de l'Empire français* (Paris 1811-13) 540.

my name, and have every hope that this request will be approved'.¹⁶⁵ The privilege was granted to them in that same year, 1811.¹⁶⁶

It is scarcely a coincidence that this dictionary should figure prominently on the list of highlights that Pieter notes in his autobiography and as characteristic of his list in the final period in which he was active as a publisher. With a print run of 5,000 in 1811, at a cost of around 10,000 guilders¹⁶⁷ and a retail price of 4 guilders 16 stivers for a sewn copy, the profit margin was around fifty percent. Every single one of the other successes that Pieter remembered from the period 1795-1807 also concern titles with demonstrably large print runs. Not only does he mention Janson's English-Dutch and Dutch-English pocket dictionary from 1807 and the works of Ewaldus Kist, but also, last but not least:

that which I should have mentioned first, the *Kantiques*, which I never would have thought of if my son had not sent them and given me his support.¹⁶⁸

While the other titles that he presented to his progeny may not be regarded as common knowledge, the *modus operandi* certainly is.¹⁶⁹ With just a

¹⁶⁵ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 43, Abraham to Adolph dated 16 May 1811.

¹⁶⁶ A. Blussé, *Dictionnaire portatif françois & hollandois et hollandois & françois publié par Abraham Blussé jeune et dédié à Monsieur le Baron de Stassart* (Dordrecht 1811). The book is dedicated by the author to the prefect responsible for granting the privilege, Monsieur le Baron de Stassart. Not only is the prefect's name featured in large letters on the title page, but he is also thanked effusively for his patronage in an accompanying text printed in the front of the book.

¹⁶⁷ This can be seen in the private account book belonging to Abraham Blussé Jr in which the costs for the 1811 reprint are noted down on 26 October 1811: 'Half of the expenses for the new printing of the *Dictionnaire portatif* 4,471 guilders and 12 stivers' (GAD, BFA, inv. 14).

¹⁶⁸ GAD, BFA, inv. 11.

¹⁶⁹ See the quotation at the beginning of this chapter. The other titles mentioned are L. Euler, *Volledige inleiding tot de kennis der algebra* (2 vols.; Dordrecht 1807), earlier editions of which were published by Blussé in 1773 and 1788; J.G. Staring, *Algemeen zakelijk Bijbelsch woordenboek* (11 vols., Amsterdam, J. de Groot). From a Blussé prospectus dated 27 August 1802 (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 6) we learn that the purchase involved 200 remaining copies. The complete series was offered for sale for 30 guilders instead of at the original price of 108 guilders and 25 stivers. Further: *Zedelijke verhalen van D'Arnaud, Mercier en anderen* (Moral Tales) (16 vols.), purchased around 1799. From the printing house ledger from 1799 it appears that 3,150 prospectuses were printed for this title. By 'De Fransche Bijbels' Pieter meant a number of batches of Bibles in the French language that he purchased in 1801 from the Amsterdam publisher D. Changuion and his Amsterdam colleague D. onder de Linden. He had these Bibles in stock in various sizes, bound and unbound (with bindings in several price ranges) (see advertisement OHC 31 October 1801: 'have become the property of A. Blussé & Son'). From an advertisement in the *Amsterdamsche Courant* dated 6 September 1800 it appears that Blussé and the Leiden publisher J. Honkoop purchased *Tafereel van*

few exceptions they were odd lots bought from others, most of which were remaindered by Blussé. On the basis of the preceding material we may assume that this type of buying and selling had its lucrative aspects. Which brings us back to the question posed earlier: why did the publishing firm of A. Blussé & Son not confine itself to the production of dictionaries, theological works, law books and school textbooks—which was so profitable—and the partial re-issue of earlier series bought from other publishers, which may have been even more lucrative? Why, in other words, did the publishing house invest in much riskier genres such as literature and travel books or in such a labour-intensive enterprise as the twenty-four-volume series on industry? In addition to the above-mentioned reasons—spreading the risk and the limited capacity for growth shown by the above-mentioned ‘cast-iron’ genres, along with the increasing number of Blussé mouths to feed after 1797—there must have been another consideration. Blussé’s interest in investing in the reputation of his publishing house was commercial as well as personal, since the financial basis of the business was formed by just this solid, enduring segment of the market. A reputation for reliability and solidity and a certain touch of prestige as a publisher were no luxury when it came to landing a contract like the Walloon hymnal. And prospective buyers of the relatively expensive but long-lasting dictionaries were not likely to buy a product from a publisher known for his errors in typography, printing and grammar, or who had a reputation for going back on his word and issuing a new ‘improved’ version right on the heels of a ‘definitive’ version. A customer about to purchase a long-running series would have to have confidence in the publisher’s promise to finish the work. After all, an incomplete series would disgrace his bookshelves (which was probably true of the thirty-two volume *De nieuwe reiziger*) or would suffer a loss of authority (as with the new Michaelis Bible translation). A. Blussé & Son was reliable, and they were determined to let it be known. It was not for nothing that in each foreword to the multi-volume *Volledige beschrijving van alle konsten, ambachten, enz.* the problems that had to be surmounted during production were described in such detail.¹⁷⁰ This is why it was so important to Blussé to bring out all twenty-four volumes of his series on industry that he had promised in 1786—even

natuur en konst from L. Schenk Janszoon. The number of volumes is not mentioned in this advertisement but it was probably about eighteen. In the advertisement there is mention of a *Huisbibliotheek* offered for sale as a complete set for the sum of 18 guilders ‘or in monthly instalments of 3 volumes at 1 guilder per volume’.

¹⁷⁰ See for this chapter 4.

if it took him more than thirty years. The production of the *Volledige beschrijving van alle konsten, ambachten, enz.* can be considered a commercial enterprise in the sense that it was a showpiece for the reliability and solidity of the publishing house. This would also have been one of the reasons why Blussé, while admittedly investing in genres that were not so long-lasting, would never have been caught publishing something like *Schacubak en de Barmecide*, to name one example held up by Mijnhardt. In order to gain a clearer picture of this policy, we cannot avoid comparing the Blussé list with that of a number of his colleagues.

Physiognomy without Pictures: A Comparison

By now it will have become clear that even a superficial excursion into the Blussé publisher's list brings a great deal of the eighteenth-century world into view, though admittedly not all of it. One question remains, however: into which part of that world are we being led? While the Blussé list in itself provides ample opportunity to wander off onto various side roads, the chance of going astray increases when we look at the works Pieter did not publish. Yet if we are to come to an understanding of the way Blussé portrayed himself with respect to other publishers, such an exercise cannot be avoided. As observed earlier, Holtrop's list during this period had far less of a religious slant but was far more political. Unlike Blussé he also published novels, and at the core of his list was the production of children's books, far more so than with Blussé. The same pattern emerges from Allart's list, who, not coincidentally, frequently worked in partnership with Holtrop. Allart was less politically assertive than Holtrop, however, and his list was broader, with room for the kinds of works that Blussé put on the market (in fact sometimes they were identical if he had bought them from Blussé).¹⁷¹ But even with regard to these purchased titles we can detect a difference in publishing style. The work by De la Porte that Allart had purchased from Blussé, which was discussed earlier, is a good illustration. Although Blussé announced in the first volume, issued in 1766, that the work would be published without illustrations in order to keep the price down, a promise he kept right up to the end, Allart, after purchasing the work, decided to amplify De la Porte's travels with maps and street plans. Blussé's edition of Lavater's *Physiognomiekunde* (Handbook for the Study of Physiognomy) was probably of little use to eighteenth-century readers because

¹⁷¹ For an impression of Allart's list see Broos, *Lijst van boek- en plaatwerken*.

of the virtual absence of illustrations—and thus of examples—but it does give us a profile of the publisher. As we have already seen, he devoted himself in the advertising campaign to underscoring the soundness, the compactness and the affordability of this publication. But unlike Allart's edition of Lavater's original, richly illustrated *Physiognomiekunde*, Blussé's version brought him neither fame nor sales. The power of the practically-minded Pieter Blussé did lie in the production of handbooks, but only those with somewhat more earthy subject matter.

His production of law books with accompanying summaries and explanations, a growing market in the Napoleonic period, has already been discussed, and so has his *Volledige beschrijving van alle konsten, ambachten, enz.* Apart from this series Blussé also produced a number of technical handbooks such as P. Van Bleiswijk's *Natuur- en wiskundige verhandeling over het aanleggen en versterken van dijken* (Physical and mathematical discussion of the construction and reinforcement of dikes) in 1778, F. Berthoud's *Het regt gebruik van uurwerken* (The correct use of clocks) in 1790, D. Bernières *Beschrijving van een spinwiel om met beide handen tegelijk te spinnen* (Description of a spinning wheel to enable spinning with both hands at the same time) in around 1791 and his *Algemeen handboek voor kunstenaars, chemisten, fabrikanten en handwerkslieden* (General handbook for artists, chemists, manufacturers and craftsmen) in 1802 in a print run of 650. In this respect his list runs somewhat parallel to Holtrop, who also produced a number of technical books, such as the 1785 discourse on windmill sails and Hussem's 1799 *Middel om het water, welk tot dagelijksche drank voor het scheeps-volk aan boord moet strekken, volkomen te zuiveren, als het stinkend en bedorven is* (Method whereby the daily drinking water of sailors on board ship may be completely purified when it has become stinking and spoilt).¹⁷² In 1802 he and Blussé advertised a cheap, handy work 'for the poor' which explained in detail a new technique invented by an English factory for preparing waterproof sheeting and fabrics.¹⁷³ As far as applied knowledge is concerned, however, Holtrop was more inclined than Blussé to print more frivolous works, such as his 1802 *Handboek voor googchelaars* (Handbook for Conjurers) and his *Handleiding tot de bloem-, teeken-, schilder-, en borduurkunst* (Guide to the art of flower-, drawing-, painting- and embroidery) from the same year (the prospectus of which was conscientiously saved by one of Pieter's children).

¹⁷² De Pater, *Ga tot de boeken*, publisher's list.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 56.

He also published more medical reference books, such as a work on the dangers of vaccination against cowpox in 1801, Imbert's *Kunstbewerking van een vleeschbreuk* (Operating on a sarcocele) in 1798, Van Wys's *Heelkundige mengelstoffen* (Medical miscellany) in 1791, Bell's *Samenstel van heelkunde* (System of surgery) from the same period and Vrolik's *Afbeelding der vaten in de operatie der dye-breuk by mannen, te vermyden* (Illustration of the blood vessels to be avoided during the operation for femoral hernia in men) in 1800. The subtleties of this operation were not yet appreciated by all members of the medical profession, since we know that Pieter's death in 1823 was due to a fatal hernia. The medical accent in Holtrop's list strengthens the suggestion already made that Holtrop and Blussé's joint publication of the journal titled *Geneeskundige jaarboeken* (Medical annu-als) was Holtrop's initiative. Unlike Holtrop and Allart, Blussé produced only the occasional dramatic work—probably for the benefit of an amateur troupe in Dordrecht¹⁷⁴—and the section on cookery books, in which the other two publishers were pioneers, is entirely absent.

If we take a somewhat broader look at the Dutch book market of those days, such as the batches of publisher's remainders that were stored in the attics of the Amsterdam publisher Gerbrand Roos, then the contours of the Blussé list become more distinct.¹⁷⁵ These attics contained not only several stacks of titles that Roos had purchased from Blussé, as we saw, but also a number of remainders purchased from other publishers—and many of Roos's own publishing initiatives, which suggest that the range of interests among contemporary readers was somewhat broader than the Blussé list would lead one to suspect. Among the 368 titles found in the attic were 324 copies of Roos's 1807 publication of *Glorioso of de groote duivel* (Glorioso or the great devil);¹⁷⁶ the work that Roos published in 1807, *Karel Stralenheim of dankbare bandiet* (Karel Stralenheim or the grateful bandit), of which 117 remained; 238 copies of *Lof der paruijken* (In praise of periwigs); 300 of *Toveres van Verberie* (The sorceress of Verberie); a mere 18 copies of the roguish *Academie van heeren en dames* (Academy for gentlemen and ladies); 62 copies of *Idalie of ongelukkige minnares* (Idalie or the unhappy lover), which apparently was more popular than *Konst om zig van zijn vrouw te doen beminnen* (How to make your wife love you) with 195 copies still available; and 24 copies in Dutch of Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*

¹⁷⁴ A. Blussé, *De verloren zoon* (Dordrecht 1796); Fusz, *De snijder en zijn zoon* (Dordrecht 1785).

¹⁷⁵ GAA, archive 5072, inv. 1123, doc. 4221.

¹⁷⁶ Mathijssen, *Het literaire leven in de negentiende eeuw*, 13.

as opposed to 51 of *Sentimenteele toegift op alle sentimenteele reyzen, brieven en wandelingen* (Sentimental encore for all sentimental journeys, letters and excursions). And thus the bookseller Doll, who had the honour of being allowed to draw up an inventory of the chaotic and partly fraudulent property of the bankrupt Roos, must have spent many an hour. Roos had clearly overplayed his hand, which would never have happened to Blussé.

Manipulation of a reputation

Bilderdijk's opinion of A. Blussé & Son in 1817, when he declared that he would rather work with Immerzeel 'than with that inflexible, wooden and tasteless B.', was perhaps a little too blunt.¹⁷⁷ It is true, however, that when comparing Blussé's list with those of his colleagues, you automatically sense that Blussé was working to establish the kind of ultra-respectable reputation that the Dutch publisher Kok of Kampen enjoyed in the twentieth century: 'With a book from Kok you know just where you stand'.¹⁷⁸ When Pieter submitted an entry on himself for Heinemeyer's biographical dictionary, unsolicited and in the third person, it was probably to nudge readers who were still not entirely convinced, despite the solid standing of his list:

Bound by the local situation, he confined himself chiefly to the Dutch book trade, and a great number of works which he published or came to possess testify to his industriousness and taste in both choice and workmanship, among them the Dutch and French editions of the works of Buffon, which he completed in their entirety; the translation of the Bible by J.D. Michaelis & the *Volledige beschrijving van konsten, ambachten, handwerken, fabrieken*, etc.¹⁷⁹

This biographical dictionary never saw the light of day, however. G.D.J. Schotel, a Blussé's family friend who grew up in Dordrecht, had more success with his biographically-tinted *Kerkelijk Dordrecht* (Ecclesiastical Dordrecht). The first volume of this work appeared in 1839. Considering his handwritten entry on Abraham Blussé that, with corrections, has been preserved in the Blussé family archive, he must at least have been helped by one of Abraham's grandchildren, probably his namesake.¹⁸⁰ We can read the following about the publishing house:

¹⁷⁷ Dongelmans, *Johannes Immerzeel junior*, 199.

¹⁷⁸ *Volkskrant* 29 October 1994.

¹⁷⁹ UBL, Ltk 1001, 12 May 1800.

¹⁸⁰ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 22.

Among the citizens of Dordrecht who have brought fame to their city we should also number Abraham Blussé, born within its walls on 16 February 1726 and died 4 February 1808. He laid the foundations for a widely known bookshop which is still flourishing today under the fourth generation of Blussés. Not only does this bookshop deal in existing books, but they have also added many new titles to their stock. Many a piece of well-designed and useful printed matter bearing this man's name has spread the fame of his native city throughout the country and abroad, such as highly esteemed grammars and dictionaries for the chief living languages as well as many other works. Standing out among the latter is the *Histoire Naturelle*, written in French by the Count Buffon and annotated and augmented by Dutch scholars with his approval, consisting of 38 volumes in quarto, and in the Dutch language the original description of Trades and professions, expanded to twenty-four treatments and always open to new additions.¹⁸¹

This text, with a few alterations, was also included in Van der Aa's *Biografisch woordenboek* (Biographical Dictionary) from 1852-78,¹⁸² which was completed by Schotel. A shortened version of the entry can also be found in the *Nieuw Nederlands Biografisch Woordenboek*. We even find a number of elements in the standard work *Aantekeningen betreffende den boekhandel van Noord-Nederland in de 17de en 18de eeuw* (Notes concerning the book trade in the Northern Netherlands in the 17th and 18th centuries), published in 1883. The author of this work is the nineteenth-century bookseller and book historian Kruseman, however, so we would expect a more critical and especially a more personal judgment. His characterisation of the Blussé firm makes it clear that Abraham, Pieter and later his sons were all successful—one way or another—not only in acquiring a solid and respectable reputation for their publishing house but also in retaining it. Kruseman characterises the firm unequivocally as a 'prominent' bookseller, 'a firm whose memory is cherished by many successors':

As a publisher, Abraham Blussé was a man of such merit that everything that rolled off his presses in his name could be recommended. Such confidence does not come easily, not even by turning one's publishing house into a factory. Such confidence must be earned, slowly, carefully, sometimes under fire. Blussé had the ability to earn that confidence. His dictionaries and his many educational books were works of renown, as were his historical and religious publications.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Schotel, *Kerkelyk Dordrecht* II, 339-41.

¹⁸² In his younger years the compiler of this work was employed as a translator by Blussé.

¹⁸³ Kruseman, *Aantekeningen betreffende den boekhandel van Noord-Nederland*, 536-37. This text was copied verbatim in a recently written introduction to the facsimile of *Prakti-*

Kruseman goes on to name Pieter Blussé's edition of Buffon's thirty-eight-volume *Histoire naturelle*, of all things—which played such a prominent role in other reference works and was in fact a strange combination of other publishers' remainders and reprints done by his own firm—as an example of an enterprise 'involving no small amount of courage and tact'. Apparently Pieter Blussé had been so successful in convincing even Kruseman, a man of the trade, of his respectability that Kruseman was quite willing to accept his publication of other people's remainders as his own, without argument. Schotel's characterisation of Blussé as a publisher of 'well-designed and useful' printed matter is, on closer consideration, much more adequate. A producer of this type of material, as has already been thoroughly explained, is well served by a 'cast-iron' image. Yet it would be too simple to present the firm's longing for respectability as a conscious choice motivated solely by economic gain.

As argued earlier, it would seem that the book market at the end of the eighteenth century was characterised by titles that dated much more rapidly than they had before. This was partly due to a greater demand for novelty in the form of current affairs and new genres—although perhaps less pronounced than the thesis of a readers' revolution presupposes. The new genres were novels, children's books and works such as cookery books. Publishers with a nose for the market could set their sights on the latter—much more precarious—segment, of which Gerbrand Roos, with his bankrupt inventory of light literature, is the most obvious but also the most tragic example. Johannes Allart, who aimed at both market segments, fared far better. When he died he was even richer than Pieter Blussé.¹⁸⁴ Out of the same assessment of the market, however, publishers could also set their course for the stable segment—titles that were not subject to rapid obsolescence—as Blussé did with his preference for dictionaries, handbooks and school textbooks. Blussé's cautious publishing strategy thwarts the research strategy being followed here to a certain extent: to use the developments in an eighteenth-century publisher's list to gain a clearer picture of any change that may have taken place in the tastes of the reading public, at least when it comes to tracking down the newest developments. Pieter

syns woordenboekje (Groningen 1988), published by Blussé in 1785, to provide a description of the publishing house.

¹⁸⁴ Merely the proceeds from the auction of his printery and the remaining books and plates yielded the phenomenal sum of 207,508 guilders. For this see T. Broos, *Lijst van boek- en plaatwerken uitgegeven door of in samenwerking met Johannes Allart* (Amsterdam 1979) 6.

Blussé was not really a trendsetter but a follower of trends who, as mentioned, set great store by durability. By preferring to play it safe, was Blussé not backing the wrong horse instead of a winner after all but making a bad shot? This is where we stumble upon a problem that cannot be solved. The developments that take place in a list are mainly interesting when they can be observed over a long period of time, a period that comprises more than one generation. So the publishing house run by the clergyman's son Johannes Allart, who died without a successor despite being richly blessed with children, is not the most obvious choice. We are forced to rely on publishing houses with continuity and longevity, and that in turn implies choosing a family business that is handed down from father to son. Such firms have, by their very nature, a tendency to be conservative in their methods.

The Invisible Hand in the Family Archive

Familism

In his study of the textile enterprise Van Heek & Co. located in Twente in the eastern Netherlands, A.L. van Schelven introduced the concept of *familism* to characterise the specific way in which family businesses are run. In these kinds of businesses, striving to make a profit is secondary to the 'blossoming, the prestige and the continuity of the capital holders' social position. Consequently, the business is no longer an end in itself with profit maximisation as its aim, but a means for preserving hereditary familial security.¹⁸⁵ Since the business depends on the firm's operating capital to do far more than simply keep the company alive, but also regards it as security for the survival of the family's honour and glory, familism leads to low-risk entrepreneurship. So from this perspective, Pieter's tendency to be extremely cautious in all his economic activities—as publisher, book-seller, financier or lord of the manor—should not be understood so much in terms of a personal character trait. His position as *chef de famille*, the

¹⁸⁵ A.L. van Schelven, *Onderneming en familisme. Opkomst, bloei en neergang van de textielonderneming Van Heek & Co te Enschede* (Leiden 1984) 5. See also J. Kocka, 'Familie, Unternehmer und Kapitalismus an Beispielen aus der frühen deutschen Industrialisierung' in N. Bulst, J. Goy and J. Hooock (eds.), *Familie zwischen Tradition und Moderne. Studien zur Geschichte der Familie in Deutschland und Frankreich vom 16 bis zum 20 Jahrhundert* (Göttingen 1981) 221-37.

oldest, in fact the only son of his generation, demanded such an attitude.¹⁸⁶ In Pieter's range of perception, he felt he was being critically observed by both earlier generations and generations still to come, whose fate was tied up in his bargaining.

This was to a certain extent equally true of his father Abraham Blussé, the founder of the dynasty, but in the first decades when he was building up his firm he had a great deal to gain and little to lose. His position in the family—at the beginning of a long chain and not one of its links—may explain why more novelty items were visible in Abraham's list than in his son Pieter's: the richly illustrated children's book published back in 1755, *Kern der kerkebyke historie* (Essentials of church history); his 1751 edition of one of the first originally Dutch encyclopaedic works, *Alphabetische naamlijst der voornaamste ketteren* (Alphabetical list of the leading heretics);¹⁸⁷ and his publication of one of the first women's magazines in the Dutch language, *De verstandige snapsters* (The clever gossips), in 1756. Not only was the magazine's target group new, but the way it was launched was a rarity in the Republic: the first number was distributed free of charge. Nevertheless, the magazine had to be discontinued after twenty numbers on account of meagre sales.¹⁸⁸

As we already noted in the second chapter, the publishing house and bookselling firm that Pieter took over in 1770 had a strong national market position that his father had built up from practically nothing—he began with a small bookbinder's shop. The innovative attitude displayed by Abraham, and by Pieter before his marriage—the setting up of a lending library, capitalising on an increased interest in antiquarian books, organising business trips to Brabant and Flanders, running auctions, taking advantage of a new trend for more frequent and more attractive advertising—is typical of a family enterprise still in the hands of the first generation. Within the scheme set up by H. Nicolai, based on a theory by J. Kocka, Abraham's economic conduct falls into the 'C category', that is, the category of entrepreneurs who are among the founders of a family company, usually with a limited number of direct successors.¹⁸⁹ Entrepreneurs of this type are said to be focused on consumption (Abraham's purchase of the Mijnsherenher-

¹⁸⁶ See C. Schmidt, *Om de eer van de familie. Het geslacht Teding van Berkhout 1500-1950, een sociologische benadering* (Amsterdam 1986) 15-24.

¹⁸⁷ See Chapter Three.

¹⁸⁸ See Chapter Two under the heading 'Marketing and publicity'.

¹⁸⁹ H. Nicolai, 'Het functioneren van een familie-economie: de Kingma's in Makkum, 1750-1919', *It Beaken* 54 (1992) 27-41, 36-37.

berg mansion springs to mind), they invest in working capital, are not tied geographically to one location and are inclined to operate in an innovative way without avoiding risk. Once the firm has been built up, the following generation will evolve to 'D type' economic behaviour. These entrepreneurs usually have to take a far larger number of direct successors into account. They are moderate consumers, they still invest in working capital but these investments are linked to succession and their entrepreneurial style is cautious in which they are only prepared to take limited risks, and they are far more geographically tied to their native region than the previous generation. When type D reaches old age and has passed the business on to his children he will gradually change into type B, which means that, unlike type D, he will no longer invest in working capital—this will gradually be disposed of—and instead will invest in private bonds with a low return. This type of family entrepreneur prefers not to take risks.¹⁹⁰ Painful as it is to impose a stereotype on an individual like Pieter Blussé whose many facets we have come to know, it must be said that there are a striking number of similarities between his economic conduct and that of type D, and during the last period of his life also of type B. While Abraham, who, unlike Pieter with his seven sons, had only two successors, tried to extend the business by setting up an Amsterdam branch, there is no indication that Pieter Blussé ever undertook such an initiative. As we know, the appointment of Abraham Jr as editor-in-chief of the internationally-oriented *Gazette de Leyde* was not an initiative of Pieter Blussé but of Jean Luzac. Pieter had been in favour of installing Abraham Jr as an editor of the local newspaper, the *Dordrechtsche Courant*. In order to help his children get settled, Pieter expanded the business to include a number of allied branches which mainly operated locally. Even Abraham's failed attempt to get his son Pieter a position in Amsterdam very early on (Pieter got homesick for his native town and wanted to live closer to his family) was not chance coexistence; within this scheme it was Pieter's destiny: 'Type D will stay in his native region for social and symbolic reasons'.¹⁹¹

The fact that Pieter was subsequently given the opportunity to take over his father's firm at such a young age is far less usual in the universe of familism. To keep from taxing the intrinsically fragile alliance between fathers and their oldest sons, the average marriage age in a family economy was generally very advanced. As a result the *chef de famille* was usually over

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., esp. 36-39.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 36.



55. Painted funerary monument for Abraham Blussé Sr with the following handwritten inscription (here in translation): 'Silhouette of the over-80-year-old Mr Abraham Blussé, [who was] born in Dordrecht on 16 February 1726 and died there on 4 February 1808.' Private collection.

seventy before he has to hand over his authority.¹⁹² In this respect the Blussés seem to have followed a different pattern—Pieter was relatively young when his married sons entered the firm—but this could be put down to Pieter's wild passion for his Sophia, his lucky number. Her guardians forced a premature succession to the throne. The reason for this early switch can also be laid at Abraham's door. He had an overpowering love for his only son, for whom even the best was not good enough. To enable him to satisfy his passion he was willing to step down at an unusually young age and even to relinquish his home. For her part, Sophia made for rich spoils, too, at least in the figurative sense. Such crude economic motives have already been sufficiently discussed in previous chapters. But the moment for

¹⁹² Ibid., 31-35.

harmony and pleasure had now arrived, even if it was only because this quality was apparently held in exceedingly high esteem in the Blussé family and played a prominent part in the collective family identity.

Although Abraham officially withdrew from the firm in 1770, his presence was strongly felt until his death in 1808. It was within the publishing house that this presence could be observed: the list from before 1770 continued to be his responsibility, and he and Pieter launched some new editions which were auctioned immediately after his death. His influence on the family culture was even more pronounced. The family portraits that were painted over the years are accompanied by commentaries written in verse either on the back of the painting or on separately attached, beautifully decorated cards, in Abraham's handwriting, not his son Pieter's. The many poems written to celebrate birthdays, silver wedding anniversaries of family members, newlyweds or little Blussés being promoted from one class to the next were also mostly from Abraham's hand. It was Abraham too, and not Pieter, who was the central figure in all sorts of occasional poems written by friends for family events. He was the primogenitor. Even in a marriage poem dated 1807, a year before Abraham's death, it was mainly the grandfather and not the father whose praises were sung:

May you, with joyful heart, behold their prosperous ways,
And all your children too, we wish them many years;
And to your ancient chief, the object of our praise,
Three generations strong, our grateful love endears!¹⁹³

Abraham's great commitment to the spiritual formation of his grandchildren is evident in his many pedagogically tinted poetic offerings on their progress—'Dearest grandson Abraham, First offshoot from my bough'¹⁹⁴—as well as in their letters to him and his replies. He often entertained them in his house, as we saw in the section on his reception of Lavater; there we see that after the grandchildren had thrown the entire house in an uproar their grandfather led them in prayer and then bundled them off to church. From the passages concerned it becomes clear that he served as spiritual guide to his grandchildren, as well as to his son and daughter-in-law Sophia. After all, they were given the resolute advice to refrain from reading Lavater in favour of Hervey. Abraham took a big step backwards when he handed

¹⁹³ The poem was written by Pieter van Braam and is to be found in GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 59.

¹⁹⁴ GAD, BFA, inv. 7.

the firm over to his son in 1770, but he certainly had not been shunted off to the side.

Such a combination contains all the makings of murder or manslaughter. Nicolai, who conducted an in-depth study of the Kingma family, shows us the far-reaching conflicts between Jan Martens Kingma, who married early, and his sons, who also reached maturity at an early age.¹⁹⁵ In the Blussé family archive, however, there is no trace of such a conflict. Neither is there any record of possible rows between Pieter and his many sons, who were almost all connected to the firm to a greater or lesser degree. Even after they had long reached adulthood they still had to deal with a sprightly father—not to mention their grandfather, who continued to be active to a very respectable age, although his hand became so unsteady towards the end that his son had to assist him with his writing.¹⁹⁶ Harmonious relations within the family and great loyalty to one another were an absolute must for the functioning of a family economy. Even so, considering their demographic composition, it was no mean feat that the Blussés were so successful. The careful division of labour—Pieter as the business manager and Abraham as the actual *chef de famille* for most other affairs, with Pieter's sons having a joint interest in the firm but each with his own territory—will have greatly benefitted family relations. What was equally important for harmonious cooperation—indeed, harmonious blending—was the creation of a collective family identity.

The chaos of the archive that is the focus of this book's introduction was only apparent. The logic that lay behind the archive and behind Pieter's autobiographical notes is in a certain sense completely foreign to the historian's trade. For a historian is expected to bring history to a level of calm by imposing an order on the past that is as durable as possible. But the Blussé archive was originally conceived as a palace of memories, a living organism: a jumble box in which each successive generation flexibly shaped a collective family identity that was constantly being redefined.¹⁹⁷

Assembling an archive that accompanies the formation of a family consciousness involves more than just collecting papers. Immaterial concerns such as stories, names, nicknames, family myths and family secrets fulfil

¹⁹⁵ Nicolai, 'Het functioneren van een familie-economie', 34.

¹⁹⁶ Evidence of this can be found in a letter from Abraham Blussé Sr dated 28 February 1803 which was written on his behalf and signed by him in a very shaky hand. The handwriting in the text of the letter is that of Pieter Blussé Sr (GAD, BFA, inv. 7).

¹⁹⁷ See also A. Baggerman, 'Het geheugenpaleis van de familie Blussé', *Kunstschrift* 44 (2000) no. 2 (special issue on 'Egodocumenten') 39–44.

no less important a function.¹⁹⁸ In the archive of the Dutch royal family, for instance, that is a 'secret bag' that Queen Wilhemina inherited from her mother. She was given the bag with detailed instructions on how the object was to be opened and then sealed. In the Blussé family circle a mysterious box did the rounds for a long time: its contents were to be shown to no one outside the family. Objects, with or without meaning, are of great importance to a family's collective memory. It is no coincidence that such traditions are the preserve of higher circles: noble families, entrepreneurial houses and gentlemen farmers. The royal family's jumble box is so vast that it required a separate palace to house it all: the royal private archive, with only limited access for outsiders.

The Family Archive as a Palace of Memories

Abraham Blussé Sr, founder of the business and equipped with a patriarchal name and matching status, laid the foundations for the family consciousness. Scores of notes and letters in the family archive bear witness to the active genealogical interest that accompanied dynastic aspirations.¹⁹⁹ As already shown in the first chapter, he corresponded with members of the Van Hattem family, relatives of his wife, about the family's connections with other illustrious lineages—'Van Eck, Van Bommel, Van Rhijnen, the knights of Walebeeck'—and about the Van Hattem family's coat of arms, from which he adopted one of the quarterings for a new Blussé coat of arms. Abraham was possibly even more fascinated by a great aunt of his wife's, Lydia Catharina van Hattem, duchess of Chandos and wife of the immensely rich James Brydges, paymaster general under the duke of Marlborough, who employed Handel for a few years as his composer-in-residence when Handel was already internationally famous and whose name is connected with the composer's Chandos Anthems.²⁰⁰

After Abraham's death his son Pieter took over. He was not a researcher. His contribution to the archive did not consist in genealogical investigations but in writing down the oral tradition that was known to him. He also began entrusting his own memoirs to paper shortly before he died. These

¹⁹⁸ Compare R. Dekker, 'Autobiografisch beeld en beeldende autobiografie', *Kunstschrift* 44 (2000) no. 2 (special issue on 'Egodocumenten') 4-13.

¹⁹⁹ Genealogical investigations may indeed go hand in hand with dynastic interests, but they also serve a number of practical purposes. For instance, compilations of genealogical material could be important in inheritance questions so that claims of kinship could be verified (Prak, *Gezeten burgers*, 152).

²⁰⁰ See Chapter One.

show that he had a very detailed memory for past events. He describes his father's silver wedding anniversary that had taken place twenty years earlier as if it had happened yesterday. He was equally skilled in recalling special occasions that had taken place more than half a century earlier. Thinking back on his childhood years, he writes: 'I was late in walking and even later in talking'. The death of his uncle Adolph when he was ten years old is still so real to him that, more than sixty years later, he still is unable to describe the sad parting at his deathbed with dry eyes: 'Yes, dear departed uncle! I thank you still for all the love you showed me, and confirm it with one sweet tear'. Even the temporary separation from his parents in 1765 when he was apprenticed to the Amsterdam publisher Loveringh, and the feelings of homesickness that overcame him, are engraved in his memory: 'And there I stand in the bloom of my youth, having not yet reached 17 years, completely alone and left to my own resources'. This is followed by a detailed description of his life in Amsterdam—his patron's ailments, the address of his lodgings, the problems with his fellow tenants (whom he can still remember by name) and the sword he received from Loveringh when he left to return to Dordrecht in 1769. Most of the pages in his autobiography are devoted to just one year of his life: the year 1770, when he encountered the great love of his life, Sophia Vermeer. He remembers this period in minute detail: from the time and the place of their first meeting to the moment his beloved consented to marry him. Experts agree that this kind of recall is exceptional. The results of an experiment by Wagenaar show that even six months after an event has occurred there is a sharp decline in the number of details a person can dredge up from memory alone.²⁰¹ Other studies have shown that a person's individual memory of events improves considerably when they are lifelong members of the same collective, from the same closely-knit family unit and village community. An extreme example of this is the highly detailed testimony of the residents of the fourteenth-century heretical French mountain village, Montailou.²⁰² The Blussé family also showed an extreme closeness and a great attachment to the Blussé past, which they lived and relived together. By telling each other stories, constantly exchanging common narratives and cherishing the memories of past generations of Blussés, they kept this past

²⁰¹ W.A. Wagenaar, 'My memory: A study of autobiographical memory over six years', *Cognitive psychology* 18 (1986) 225-52.

²⁰² B. Ebels-Hoving, 'Middelleeuwse geheugenprestaties: de memorie in Montailou', *Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis* 106 (1993) 323-48.

alive.²⁰³ It is also clear from Pieter's autobiographical sketch that the family archive played an important role as a palace of memories, alongside the stories that were recounted.²⁰⁴ A remarkable number of the events Pieter described are reflected in the relics preserved in the archive. The most obvious example is the packet of love letters written by Sophia and himself, eighty-seven in total, tied together with a half-disintegrated ribbon. But also included is the announcement of Adriaan Gijsbert's birth, the wording of which Pieter could recall verbatim thirty years later: 'The fruitful vine on the wall of my house has once more presented me with a fresh offshoot'.²⁰⁵ Sometimes Pieter would rack his brains first before searching for a corroborative document. On the subject of Abraham Jr's successful career at the Latin school he writes that he stood out because 'his composed behaviour ... quickly earned him the affection of his teachers ... while winning public prizes rewarded and stimulated his diligence.' Written in the margin next to this passage we find the comment that Abraham's ambition was also stimulated by 'the cheerful singing of his grandfather'. Abraham Sr's poems in praise of his namesake's scholarly achievements have already been mentioned and for the same reason that Pieter refers to them here: their accessibility. These poems have been painstakingly preserved in the archive.²⁰⁶ When Pieter writes down his reminiscences he is literally engaged in autobiographical mining.

Pieter was forced to remain silent on matters recorded in archival material that was lost during his lifetime, and consequently there are gaps in this book as well. This was true, for instance, for his business trip to Flanders and Zeeland in 1771. In 1822 there were evidently 'still a few fragments remaining which, because of subsequent activities and the fading of notes that were partly done in pencil, I have not been able copy out'.²⁰⁷ The fact that Pieter was helpless without the notes—he wasn't even sure how long the trip had taken, changing its length from two months to six weeks with-

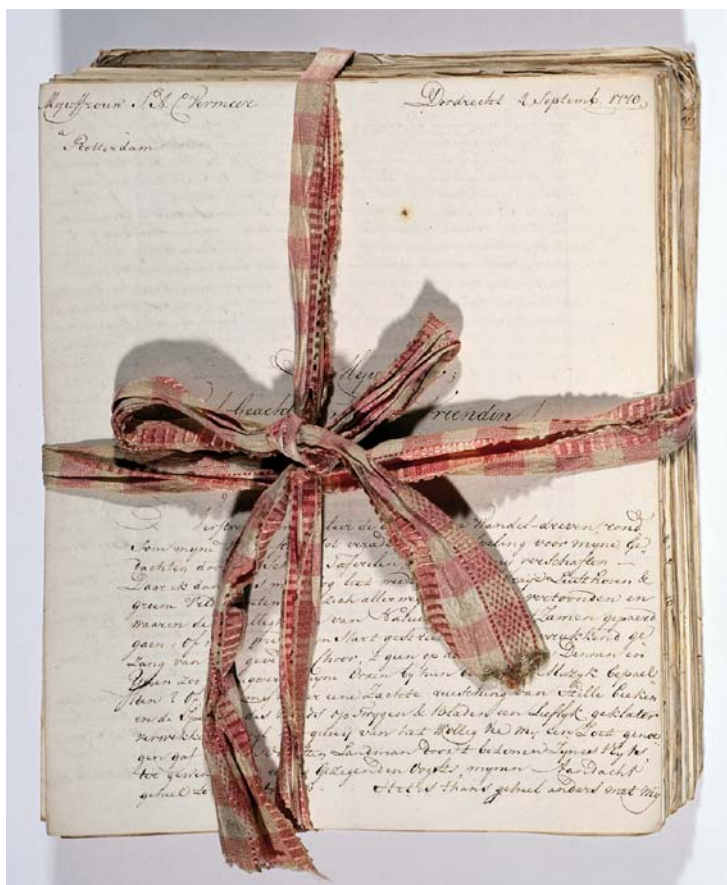
²⁰³ M. Halbwachs emphasises the collective quality of memory. When people become detached from the social group with which they share memories they are unable to access large parts of this memory. This also explains why for the most part people remember so little of their early childhood experiences: the impressions we gain before we are social beings have nothing to attach themselves to (M. Elchardus [ed.], *Maurice Halbwachs. Het collectief geheugen* [Amersfoort 1991] [= *Sociale wetenschappen klassiek* 5] 9-11).

²⁰⁴ For more on the stimulating effect that tangible relics have on the memory see P.H. Hutton, 'The art of memory reconceived: from rhetoric to psychoanalysis', *Journal of the history of ideas* (1987) 48, 371-92, esp. 371-72.

²⁰⁵ BFA, unsorted, box 49.

²⁰⁶ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 42.

²⁰⁷ GAD, BFA, inv. 11 (Pieter Blussé's autobiography).



56. Nearly all the love letters exchanged by Pieter Blussé Sr and Sophia Arnolda Vermeer (87 letters) in the period 1770–71, tied together with the original ribbon. Dordrecht Municipal Archives.

in a single paragraph—shows once again how important a collective experience is for the work of the memory. Pieter took this journey alone. Later even the faded pencil notes that Pieter could no longer decipher also disappeared. They must have been of little use to the following generations, who saw them at best as monument to forgotten memories: the very opposite of what the archive was intended for.

Pieter used the archive to refresh his own memory, and in his autobiography he tries to encourage his offspring to consult it too. He does this for instance when he briefly describes the tragic death of his brother Adolph in 1767 by adding 'how deeply my father was affected is evidenced by the

elegy that he composed on this occasion'. This remark testifies to a great trust that the archive will remain intact—and indeed the poem can still be found there.²⁰⁸ The explanatory notes written on several of the documents and the wrappers in which they are contained (mentioned in my introduction) also clearly show that the archive was meant to serve as a guide for future generations. And the archive really was consulted, as can be seen from the comments added in different hands in ink, pencil and ballpoint that sometimes adorn the same wrappers and indicate their reception, which can range from 'exceptionally charming' or 'very amusing' to 'of no importance'. The increasingly detailed comments written on the wrappers, and later on the envelopes, suggest a diminishing trust in the legibility of the archive. For Pieter Blussé Sr it was enough to merely mention the fact that he had collected his father's poems in a particular box,²⁰⁹ whereas Abraham Blussé Jr marked a number of the dossiers with the name of the Blussé to whom the papers referred as well as his own name and the date of his explanation.²¹⁰ Later generations found it necessary to provide a number of Abraham Jr's letters with pencilled annotations, drawing the reader's attention to the fact that Mijnsheerenherberg is the house belonging to 'the Blussé family on Voorstraat' and that 'Piet van de Groote-kerk' refers to the later 'Mr. P.B.v.O.A.'.²¹¹ Although the Blussé archive continued as food for insiders until well into the twentieth century, there was apparently a decline in what had once been common knowledge. This process of deterioration was probably exacerbated by negligent management on the part of Abraham Jr's successor as well as by the absence of progeny. From the personal details of Abraham Blussé Jr's only son, Pierre Louis François, it would seem that he was far more interested in political worries and the literary life of his own day than in his ancestry.²¹² His only contribution to the family history is his characterisation of his grandmother Sophia, which is quoted in the introduction, who in view of her great

²⁰⁸ A. Blussé, *Lykzang op het verscheien van mijn zoontje Adolph Blussé* (n.d., n.p.) (GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 42).

²⁰⁹ GAD, BFA, box 52.

²¹⁰ GAD, BFA, inv. 3, notes on a letter from C.W. van Hattem to Abraham Blussé Sr dated 23 July 1769.

²¹¹ GAD, BFA, inv. 16, on a letter dated 28 May 1828 and 10 July 1828.

²¹² He was a lawyer, sat in the Lower House as a member of the liberal party and from 1876 to 1901 was a member of the Provincial Executive of Zuid-Holland (DC dated 20 November 1908; NNBW IV, 169). In his younger years he worked from time to time as the political editor for the periodical *De Gids* (R. Aerts, *De letterheren. Liberale cultuur in de negentiende eeuw: het tijdschrift De Gids* [Amsterdam 1997] 136-37).

fertility was described as 'a "cannon" from behind and a "milch cow" from the front'. This politician remained unmarried and died without an heir, so with him Abraham Jr's lineage died out. Some of his family papers, including his father's dossiers, ended up with Adolph Blussé's branch of the family. Of all the male descendants generated by Pieter and Sophia this is the only branch that has survived.

From the letters and dossiers concerning Abraham Jr that have been preserved, it emerges that he shared the same passion for genealogy as his grandfather, the man after whom he was named. He added the results of his own investigations to a number of his grandfather's dossiers and introduced some new ones as well, including a file called 'Blussé, not immediate family' as a result of his research into Blussé relatives. Like his grandfather, however, he was not only interested in the male line as so many families are.²¹³ His interest, as we have seen, also extended to include his grandmother's relations as well as the ancestry of his mother and his wife.

This lack of 'Blussé centrism' also seems to have been passed down from generation to generation and must in part have arisen from the male Blussés' tendency to marry above their station to orphaned daughters from families with more illustrious ancestry than their own. Pieter Blussé's grandfather, after whom he was named, married the fatherless Elisabeth van Hattem in 1703. His son, Abraham Blussé Sr, married a daughter from the second marriage of the deceased bailiff and dike warden of Dirksland. Pieter Blussé Sr tied the knot with the completely orphaned Sophia Vermeer. His oldest son Abraham Blussé Jr married a fatherless only daughter, Jeanne Petronella Maizonnet. Pieter Blussé Jr married Clara Maria van Braam, the only remaining descendant of her line, which brought about not only a merger of two publishing firms but also of two family names. The children of their oldest son Pieter took both surnames: Van Braam Blussé.

All these daughters with their good credentials received a warm welcome in the rich Blussé family life and the ever-richer Blussé family archive. It is already evident from the love letters between Pieter and Sophia that part of the Blussé attraction lay in the warm-heartedness and generosity they had to offer. Sophia was regularly reminded by Pieter that after their

²¹³ Compare the much greater singlemindedness of the Kingma family as discussed in H. Nicolai, 'De genealogie van het voorwerp: dierbare voorwerpen en familiecultuur bij de Kingma's te Makkum' in P. te Boekhorst, P. Burke and W. Frijhoff (eds.), *Cultuur en maatschappij in Nederland 1500-1850. Een historisch-antropologisch perspectief* (Heerlen 1992) 285-316, esp. 307.



57. Watercolour by J.W. Sluyter of a ball given on the occasion of the marriage of a great-grandson of Adolph Blussé, Pieter Blussé van Oud-Alblas, to his cousin Wilhelmina Cornelia Staring, daughter of Maurits Lodewijk Christiaan Staring and Johanna Houkjen Blussé, on 6 June 1901. Museum Mr. Simon van Gijn Dordrecht.

marriage she would no longer be parentless thanks to the parental feelings that Abraham and Cornelia felt for her. Jeanne Petronella Maizonnet, whose father died when she was barely two weeks old, was also lovingly adopted by her new family, as her poem written in honour of Pieter's fifty-eighth birthday shows:

A fatherly embrace was never mine to cherish
 Nor did I ever rise to sing his birthday song;
 But death must have its way, untimely did he perish,
 Until in you I found what I had missed so long,
 When first I uttered 'father' it was in greeting you.²¹⁴

Jeanne Petronella's mother, Cornelia de Court, was also present at this party. The poem she composed for this occasion bears a striking resemblance to the one Pieter van Braam was to perform a year later at the marriage celebrations of his only remaining child with Pieter Blussé Jr. Both allude to the continuation of their own dying branch of the family through

²¹⁴ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 45.

the strong Blussé family tree. Cornelia wishes Pieter Blussé Sr a long life in which he might witness the success of his rich (in more than one respect) progeny:

See your offspring grow and flourish
Hear your counsel, walk your way,
And your family tree encourage;
Now new shoots have come to stay
Who address you as their father
Whom they honour day by day.²¹⁵

In the end it was Cornelia who was to enjoy the greatest longevity and to see her children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren growing up. She outlived every one of her generation and died eleven years after Pieter Blussé, in 1834.²¹⁶ The same fate awaited her daughter Jeanne Petronella who died shortly before her 103rd birthday in 1876. She did not outlive her daughter. This granddaughter of Cornelia, Louise Sophie Reuvens Blussé, who was born in 1801 and died in 1896, was to live to see the age of photography.²¹⁷ The photograph of her taken at a very advanced age, in which she poses with an early nineteenth-century stiffness and bearing the look of someone caught out by time itself, has become part of the family's collective memory in which the recollection of this line of indestructible women still lives on to this day.

Jacoba Holle, Adolph's wife, appears also to have been fully integrated into the family of her in-laws. Her genealogical activities seem to have been limited to investigating her husband's family relatives. Jacoba's request to Abraham Blussé Jr to be allowed to borrow and copy a letter from 'Father Blussé' dealing with the connection between the Blussé, Vallaré and Verburg families was received with welcome. She received the letter in question by return post with an added bonus: the original last will and testament of her mother-in-law's father:

Just look at this, my dearest sister! The letter left by Father Blussé. And a similar one from Grandfather Vermeer. This is even more that you expected from me! It is a double treasure; a double light that I will in no way hide under a bushel.²¹⁸

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ She lived to the age of eighty-nine.

²¹⁷ She was married to the celebrated Caspar Jacob Christiaan Reuvens, the first professor of archaeology in the Netherlands.

²¹⁸ GAD, BFA, inv. 10, 17 December 1834. It concerns one of Pieter Blussé Sr's last letters (dated 12 March 1823) and the last will and testament of Hendricus Vermeer, Sophia's father (dated 16 September 1765).



58. Photograph taken in 1872 of Louise Sophie Reuvens Blussé (1801-1896). Dordrecht Municipal Archives.

This letter also says a great deal about the role of Abraham Blussé Jr. He was the keeper of the family papers to whom other members of the family could turn if they needed information. The archive still contains a bundle of papers in Pieter's handwriting on which is written the message 'for Adolph', but it only contains documents of which there was more than one available copy: the occasional poems written by Abraham Blussé Sr. Original papers were given to Abraham Jr to look after, just as the family books started by Pieter (or taken over from his father) was also continued by Abraham Jr.²¹⁹ Abraham made a fair copy of this family book-in-progress, which was probably originally kept in the family Bible, and supplemented it with facts from his own life. The first-person form remained unchanged, however, which gives us the impression that we are dealing with a masterly example of reincarnation—the 'I' person is born, marries, has children, dies and is born again—when in fact we are being presented with a

²¹⁹ GAD, BFA, inv. 10.

document that is symbolic of Abraham Jr's awareness of being part of a collective family identity.

This awareness, as demonstrated, is built up and maintained with the aid of names, family papers and stories as well as objects that were passed down generation to generation.²²⁰ The sabre given to Pieter Sr by his Amsterdam master Loveringh, and which he refers to in his autobiography, is still circulating within the family. The same is true of the silver goblet, which bears an inscription explaining that it was presented to Abraham Sr in 1801 by his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren on the occasion of his silver wedding anniversary with his second wife. On the foot of this goblet is an inscription stating that Abraham Jr drank from it in 1849 when celebrating his golden wedding anniversary with Jeanne Petronella Maizonnet. Around the rim of the foot are inscriptions of several family members who commemorated their golden, silver and, as the years passed, even copper wedding anniversaries by taking a sip from this goblet. The Louis XVI chairs of Dutch make which Pieter Blussé Sr had made especially for himself and Sophia have no inscription. To this day they are still used by one of the Blussés.²²¹ Even the uniform worn by Jan Jacob Blussé as a member of the Dordrecht garde d'honneur when awaiting the arrival of Napoleon appears to have withstood the ravages of time. After having added lustre to many a family get-together, the uniform had to pursue its further career without a Blussé to wear it. Twenty years ago, a namesake of Pieter Blussé Sr, a retired cavalry officer, gave it on loan to the Delft Army Museum where it adorns a mannequin in a sealed showcase.²²² It was not until that moment that it became a lifeless thing, a museum object in the midst of a public collection, quite different from its original home where its sole purpose had been to affirm the 'Blussé identity' and to pass it on from to new generations. For many years the same function was fulfilled by the family portraits, but they too were donated to museums at the same time as the uniform because, as one family member joked, spouses could no longer bear being stared at by Blussés from every nook and cranny of their homes. The historian Johan Elias described the impact of such objects

²²⁰ For a detailed analysis of a family archive from this perspective see Nicolai, 'De genealogie van het voorwerp'; *Ibid.*, *De Kingma-kroniek, of: Hoe een familiegeheugen meer dan tweehonderdvijftig jaar intact bleef* (Groningen 1997).

²²¹ With thanks to Leonard Blussé van Oud-Alblas who allowed me to view the goblet mentioned and who also told me about a number of other objects.

²²² With thanks to Pieter Blussé van Oud-Alblas who assisted me in tracking down the uniform.



59. The uniform worn by Jan Jacob Blussé as a member of the Dordrecht guard of honour that received Napoleon in 1811. Legermuseum Delft.

from his own experience when, looking back on the emergence of his historical interest, he described his parental home:

All around us in my parents' home hung the portraits of former generations of Eliases. ... With their images staring down at me every day how could it be otherwise than that I developed a keen sense of my family's involvement in the glorious history of our homeland. How I longed to know more about old Mayor Elias, whose coat of arms was depicted in four different places

at the time on both ‘mayoral windows’ in the venerable and stately Old Church, which I visited with my Father every Sunday morning.²²³

The Blussé family papers were also kept alive until well into the twentieth century, judging by the presence in the archive boxes of court communiqués on Queen Wilhelmina’s accession to the Dutch throne, menus from the 1930s and the announcement of a Van Riebeeck model-making competition for father and son from 1952.²²⁴ Sometimes one catches a playful wink from the last Blussé who, after a final rearrangement of the papers, closed the palace of memory and turned off the lights. Or perhaps it was accidental that the doggerel recited by the horn players at the cyclers’ camp of the Leidsche Studenten Weerbaarheid (Leiden Students’ Defence) in 1914—‘De Koevert shouted with a vengeful heart: “For what you did I’ll tear you apart”’—was stored in the same dossier as a newspaper from that same year bearing the banner headline ‘The War’ and with dismal reports of the horrors of the First World War.²²⁵ Sometimes the pieces of the puzzle fit just a little too nicely.

Is it pure chance that one of the few journals published by A. Blussé & Son should have been christened *Mnemosyne*, of all things: the goddess of memory?²²⁶ In view of the programmatic title of the journal, it certainly will have been no accident that the first number of this periodical featured a prepublication by Jacobus Koning on the Haarlem-born Laurens Janszoon Coster, claiming him as the first, sole and rightful inventor of the printing press. One year later this treatise resulted in the first national Coster Commemoration, by which the collective memory was given a new patriotic boost.²²⁷

²²³ As quoted in L. Kooijmans, ‘Vriendschap, een 18e-eeuwse familiegeschiedenis’, *Tijdschrift voor sociale geschiedenis* 18 (1992) 48–65, 52.

²²⁴ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 49.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ The complete title is *Mnemosyne. Mengelingen voor wetenschappen en fraaije letteren*. The first number of this periodical appeared in 1815, the last number in 1828. The editors were H.W. Tydeman and N.G. van Kampen. On the art of remembering see P.H. Hutton, ‘The art of memory reconceived: from rhetoric to psychoanalysis’, *Journal of the history of ideas* 48 (1987), 371–92.

²²⁷ ‘Verhandeling over de uitvinding der boekdrukkunst door L. Jansz. Koster te Haarlem’, *Mnemosyne* (1815) 1, 121ff. This concerns a prepublication of Jacobus Koning’s *Verhandeling over den oorsprong, de uitvinding, verbetering en volmaking der boekdrukkunst* that was awarded a prize in 1816 by the Royal Society of Science in Haarlem. The author was still anonymous in 1815. For the influence this debate had see the epilogue: ‘The singing journeymen printers’.



61. Adriana Cornelia Crena de Iongh (1854-1937), widow of Adolph Blussé van Oud-Alblas (1846-1885) at the Louterbloemen estate in 1918. The land on which this country house was built was bought in 1854 by Pieter Blussé van Oud-Alblas (1812-1887) for the purpose of building a spacious villa in Italian style. Financial difficulties prevented the realisation of these plans, but a tea house, stables, rustic chalet and tennis courts were eventually built. After suffering heavy damage in the Second World War, the grounds and buildings were sold in 1961 to the city of Dordrecht, and an industrial estate rose up on the site. Only the name Louterbloemen recalls the original country house. Museum Mr. Simon van Gijn Dordrecht.

As long as they are yet to be inventoried, the papers in the boxes of this archive are to be regarded as solidified memories, as *lieux de mémoire* and no longer as *milieux de mémoire*, with their own constantly changing dynamic.²²⁸ Once their annotated wrappers have been expertly removed by an archivist and, liberated from the embrace of offshoots and locks of hair, they have been subjected to a chronological reconstruction, they will no longer even function as *lieux de mémoire* but will belong to the domain of

²²⁸ On these concepts see P. Nora, 'Between memory and history: "Les lieux de mémoire"', *Representations* no. 26 (1989) 7-26.

history.²²⁹ P. Nora characterises the problematic relationship between memory and history in an inimitable way: 'Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and approbation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer'.²³⁰ It could also be worded more concisely. At one of the most beautiful spots to be found in Dordrecht, along the quay where three rivers meet, chiselled into a granite block is a line of verse written by the Dordrecht poet Jan Eijkelboom: 'What remains never returns'.²³¹

²²⁹ A. Rigney, 'De lokroep van het verleden. Literatuur als historische bron', *Feit & fictie* 4 (1999) 82-98.

²³⁰ Nora, 'Between memory and history', 8.

²³¹ This line is taken from J. Eijkelboom, *Wat blijft komt nooit terug* (Amsterdam 1979) and is to be found on the Damiate Bulwark in Dordrecht.

EPILOGUE

THE SINGING JOURNEYMEN PRINTERS: A SYNTHESIS

Scarcely a month after the body of Pieter Blussé Sr had been laid to rest in the family grave in the Augustinian Church on 19 June 1823, his son Adolph organised a colossal celebration just a few metres away to which all of Dordrecht and environs were invited.¹ Pieter himself may have assisted in organising the festivities, since he had died unexpectedly and the preparations certainly would have taken more than a month. It was impossible to postpone the event out of a sense of reverence for the deceased, however, even if Pieter had wished it. Actually the feast, held on 10 July, was already overdue.

After making a number of calculations as creative as they were obscure, Jacobus Koning had traced the invention of the printing press to the period 1420-1425. It was hoped that this would force the German Gutenberg to step aside once and for all in favour of Laurens Janszoon Coster of Haarlem. In 1822 Koning began to narrow the period down to the year 1422, but this would have imposed severe time constraints on preparations for a large-scale celebration of the discovery. So the committee that had been convened for this purpose decided to move the year up to 1423.²

Haarlem had planned a magnificent celebration for 10 July 1823 to mark the 400th anniversary of the invention of printing.³ Not wishing to be outdone, other Dutch cities such as Groningen, Hoorn, Rotterdam and Batavia in the East Indies also followed suit—as did Dordrecht. The programme for the Dordrecht festivities, which included a ‘triumphal procession’ with singing masked journeymen printers acting out their trade, was described in detail in Adolph Blussé’s newspaper, the *Dordrechtsche Courant* of 8 July

¹ A. Nelemans, *Sepulture ofte Graftboeck van de Augustijnenkerck* (Sliedrecht 1998) 134. Pieter Blussé lies buried in grave number 174. The announcement of his death was published in the *Dordrechtsche Courant* on 19 June 1823.

² N. Maas, ‘Laurens Janszoon Coster. Opkomst en ondergang van een uitvinder’ in N.C.F. van Sas (ed.), *Waar de blanke top der duinen en andere vaderlandse herinneringen* (Amsterdam/Antwerp 1995) 83.

³ L. Hellinga-Querido and C. de Wolf, *Laurens Janszoon Coster was zijn naam* (Haarlem 1988) 101-104.

1823. People living along the parade route were emphatically requested to illuminate their houses:

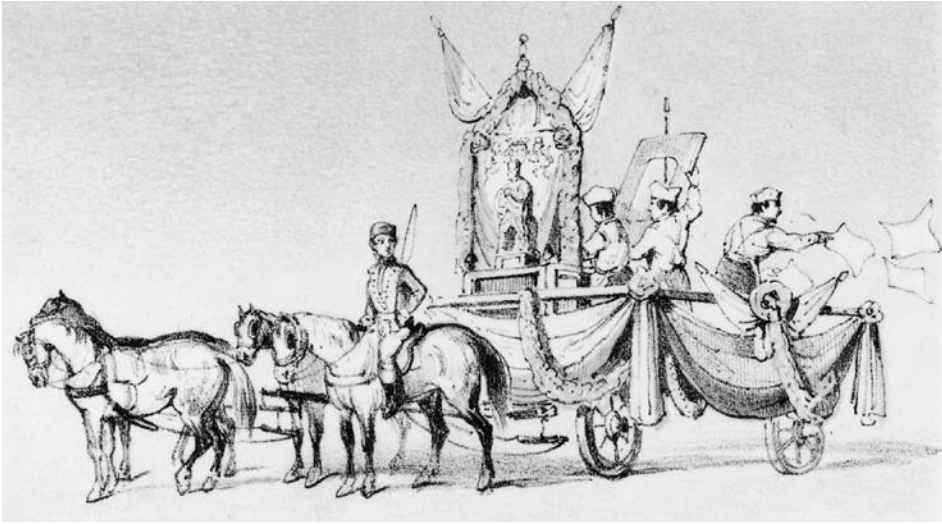
Some of the inhabitants are willing to illuminate their own homes in the desired fashion, while all who are involved in the festivities cherish the hope that the other residents of these streets will comply with the invitation, hereby presented to them, to do likewise so that the illumination along the route described above will be as widespread as possible.

The request was reiterated once more on the day of the festival, with the additional argument that the 'illumination ... will not only contribute to the gaiety of the procession but will be conducive to preserving *public order*'. As readers of the *Dordrechtsche Courant* learned a few days later, the entire celebration did pass in an orderly fashion and was a great success, but the reporter evidently required more time to recover from the festivities. On 15 July 1823 there came a full-page account describing the procession and other activities in vivid detail. Its purpose was to allow those who had been present to relish the memory of the event, to provoke the jealous glances of people from other cities and to give those who had been unable to attend the opportunity at least to participate vicariously. We gather from the newspaper article that the number of absentees must have been minimal, however. At around half past eight in the evening, the square in front of the Great Church (the starting point of the procession) was cordoned off by 'a heavy detachment of gunners and a company of Swiss officers from the garrison',⁴ while the journeymen printers from the firms of Blussé and of J. de Vos and partner changed into costumes and masks in the nearby Blussé printing office and twenty-four amateur musicians assembled in Adolph's house. As the drummers from the civic guard performed on the square, people streamed in from every direction:

From that moment on, the amazing rush of visitors from this city and surrounding towns who gathered on the square grew in just a few minutes to many thousands; every corner was crammed with people, even the trees and the rooftops.

The spectacle was certainly worth seeing. At nine o'clock the torches were lit and the procession was formed. Marching at the head were two men carrying torches followed by drummers, pipers and horn players. These were followed by a detachment of soldiers, two more torch-bearers, an open carriage bearing 'singing journeymen printers in masquerade' illumi-

⁴ This and the following passages, unless otherwise stated, are all taken from the *Dordrechtsche Courant* of 15 July 1823.



62. These journeyman printers may or may not be singing, but they are certainly riding in a carriage and printing during the 'Coster festivities' of 1856. National Archive, The Hague. Bakhuizen van den Brink Collection.

nated by two more torch-bearers, and after that two more carriages—one of them a 'charabanc' lent by Mr C. van Welsenis—carrying more singing journeymen printers wearing masks. Then came another two torches followed by the orchestra 'consisting of the city's most prominent gentlemen musicians, who, under the direction of Mr J. de Bruyn, had most kindly volunteered to enliven the procession' and whose path was also illuminated by torchlight. The twelfth part of the procession was the highlight of the evening: a printing press on wheels with a group of masked journeymen printers, singing and busily printing songs which they then distributed to the public, the ink still wet, under the watchful eye of the father of all printers, Laurens Janszoon Coster. A 'more than life-size' statue of the man, lit by candles, was enthroned in the next cart. More carriages followed, also carrying singing journeymen, 'all of them decked out in their jolliest and most comical attire', and then torch-bearers on foot, 'with a strong military detachment bringing up the rear'.

The procession wound its way through the narrow streets of downtown Dordrecht, and almost every house it passed—according to the report—had been illuminated from top to bottom with oil lamps and candles by its owner. The printing press had brought enlightenment: this was the message

conveyed not only by this dangerously flammable symbolism but also by the lyrics of the songs that the singing journeymen printers sang in their carriages and scattered as handouts to the crowd:

And Dordrecht shows, as torches burn
And all the streets illumine
How all to this invention turn,
The gift of his acumen;
This noble skill, this fertile art,
Spreads truth to every longing heart.⁵

The song titled 'The Travelling Printing Press', sung to the tune of a well-known Dutch song 'Wij leven vrij, wij leven blij' (We live in freedom, we live in joy), left even less room for misinterpretation:

This lofty art,
It fills the heart
And gives us bread as well!
Enlightened rays, where e'er they be,
Did surely bless and nourish thee,
Our honoured countryman, 'tis he,
O great and noble skill! (repeat)⁶

In the 'clownish musical dialogue between Klaas, a typesetter, and Jan, a printer' the tone was also immediately struck by a motto taken from a poem by Jan Frederik Helmers:

Bold Koster! 'Tis he who out of the longest night
Has brought the Netherlands back into the light.⁷

So although these journeymen may have had an enlightened part to play, there was nothing light about their act. While reciting their memorised

⁵ M. Westerman, *Aan de feestvierende drukkers-gezellen, van den heeren Blussé & Comp. en J. de Vos & Comp., te Dordrecht, den 10 julij 1823* (Amsterdam 1823). This and the following quoted passages were found in GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 44. Some are also to be found in the library of the Dordrecht City Archives under number 107.546.

⁶ 'De rijdende drukpers' in *Vrolijke liederen der drukkersgezellen te Dordrecht* (Dordrecht 1823). The poem is by J.P.D.J., the initials of Jan Pluim de Jaager. His name appears on Dongelmans' list of booksellers in the first half of the nineteenth century. Mention of his name also occurred in the client book of Van Benthem and de *Naamlijst* van Saakes in the period 1821-1827 (Dongelmans, *Van Alkmaar tot Zwijndrecht*, 103).

⁷ 'Boertende zamenspraak met zang' in *Vrolijke liederen der drukkersgezellen te Dordrecht* (Dordrecht 1823). This dialogue is written by D. Bonné, one of Adolph's oldest apprentice printers. The previous year he had been one of the co-authors of the poem: *Homage to our worthy patron, the esteemed Mr Adolph Blussé, on the occasion of his 25th anniversary as director of the printer's firm*, written by his oldest apprentices, D. Bonné, E. Joochems and H. du Hen (Dordrecht 1822) (GAD: 111.426).

speeches, which contained many references to specialised printers' terms, often with double entendres, they had to print these same texts on the 'mobile and fully functional' printing press. That the occasional error crept in is scarcely surprising.

No matter what I do to my *press*,
Lubricating every *screw*,
 It *groans*, it *shrieks* to my distress,
 I simply don't know what to do.
Pulling the sheet up from the *bed*,
 That's what drives me round the bend,
 For either the *paper's* far too wet,
 Or the *roller's* acting up again. ... *repeat*.

At which point the typesetter would chip in by pointing out that while he and the great master were literally in the same street (Coster's illuminated statue was in the cart right behind him), there was no comparing the two:

The type's in the *chase*, the *slugs* are in place,
 And all the *quoins* are tight,
 But the *roman's* gone *italic*,
 And I know that isn't right.
 I search the *drawer* for another *font*
 So I can carry on,
 But all that's left is *Garamond*
 And an incomplete *Caslon!* ... *repeat*.

The Via Dolorosa of the journeymen Jan and Klaas comes to an end only when the typesetters and printers come together in chorus and belt out the last eight stanzas to the tune of 'Wiens Neerlands bloed in d'adren vloeit' (Whose veins flow rich with Holland's blood), accompanied by the twenty-four-piece orchestra composed of notables:

O mortal man, you lead the way!
 Who once our earth did see!
 Before you all in darkness lay
 Now all is bright and free;
 Or was that early clouded age
 For you no state of gloom?
 Did you discover, by its lack,
 The art of printing's boon? ... *repeat*
 So let all things that dwell on earth,
 And you who foster art,
 Raise up your voice and with our own

Cause mists and clouds to part,
 Not only shall the Netherlands
 Perceive this joyous sound,
 But Koster's name shall be revered
 The whole wide world around... *repeat*

The other songs—including ‘Aan de drukkunst’ (To the art of printing), to the tune of ‘C'est l'Amour’, and ‘Het vierde eeuwfeest der drukkunst’ (Four centuries of printing), to the melody of ‘Gij die thans met mij zijt ter jagt’—are all in the same vein: national pride mixed with an almost religious veneration for Coster and his invention. The procession ended with a grand party on the Hof van Holland where, a stone's throw from the grave of Pieter Blussé,⁸ the statue of Coster could be seen ‘throughout the night, at the end of an illuminated avenue, in the centre of an illuminated temple’.

The merrymakers did a great deal more than enjoy a spectacle, as we see from the bill that Adolph was later sent bearing the names of several Dordrecht retailers. Some of the names were accompanied by a brief description of the goods they purveyed: ‘Schenk for sausage rolls’, ‘Sluisdam for meats’, ‘Heynen the tinsmith’, ‘makers of sausages’. In some cases the goods were not specified—‘Jan Tand, Van Ry, Gutteling’—who together were charged about five hundred guilders.⁹ From the same bill it emerges that the freedom so loudly extolled that evening as an achievement of the printing press was not balanced out by equality. The amateur orchestra of prominent locals enjoyed three bottles of wine and their own waiter, for which an amount of three guilders was allocated. The drummers had to be content with *Pieren-bier*, and beer was also the only drink served to the garrison soldiers. The bill did not include any alcoholic beverages for the singing journeymen printers, possibly to prevent their singing from degenerating into drunken babble. There also seems to have been a difference in the way people were treated during preparations for the procession. The printers were told to use their workshop for changing into costume, while the gentlemen's orchestra was welcomed into the home of Adolph Blussé. This group received a word of thanks in the newspaper for their kind willingness to assist in the festivities.¹⁰ By contrast, the journeymen printers thanked their patron, Adolph Blussé, by honouring him with a song. After all, he it was who had made the celebration possible:

⁸ The Augustinian church is on the Statenhof.

⁹ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 43.

¹⁰ DC 15 July 1823.

To you be all the honour, for in Dordt there ne'er could be
 So great a celebration from such humble folk as we.
 Our thanks! Our thanks for giving us this celebration grand!
 Our thanks! And not from us alone, but from all the Netherlands!¹¹

Taken all together—the way the festivities were organised and the climate of the preparations, the ideological overtones of the songs and the glorification of the secularised hero of the Enlightenment, Coster himself, as the symbol of the power of the printing press—the Dordrecht Coster Festival was the embodiment of several important transformations that had taken place during the lifetime of Pieter Blussé.

The first of these is nationalism. This Coster commemoration is one of the many nineteenth-century 'popular' festivals celebrating a national hero or historic events, and it cannot be seen apart from the process of national consciousness and unification that had already taken hold in the mid-eighteenth century.¹² It is no coincidence that in the stanza cited above the journeymen printers thanked Adolph Blussé on behalf of 'all the Netherlands' and not on behalf of 'the Fatherland'. The concept of 'the Netherlands' was not new, but now it had acquired another connotation, while 'Fatherland' would have been the unifying designation during the Patriot period, the Batavian Republic or the years of French rule. 'Fatherland' had had a long evolution. Starting in the mid-eighteenth century, 'Fatherland in decline' was the phrase heard in every province to express the concern that was being felt for the economic and cultural decline of the Republic in relation to other countries.¹³ During the Batavian Republic the term acquired a political connotation: it pointed to the struggle for governmental unification culminating in the 'one and indivisible' mentioned in the constitution of 1798. During the French period the concept of the Fatherland was transformed to express a feeling of solidarity against the French, who increasingly came to be seen as foreign occupiers. This provided the breeding ground from which former Patriots and Orangists alike, now breathlessly entwined, would burst forth in song at the return of

¹¹ *Dankerkentenis aan onzen geachten patroon Adolph Blussé, wegens het vierde Eeuwfeest van Laurens Jansz. Koster, door zijne gezamenlijke knechts* (n.p., n.d.) (GAD: 107.546).

¹² See W. van den Berg, 'Verbeelding van het vaderland. Het denken over het vaderland in de letterkunde van de eerste decennia van de negentiende eeuw' in N.C.F. van Sas (ed.), *Vaderland. Een geschiedenis van de vijftiende eeuw tot 1940* (Amsterdam 1999) 309-43.

¹³ See J.J. Kloek, 'Vaderland en letterkunde, 1750-1800' in N.C.F. van Sas (ed.), *Vaderland. Een geschiedenis van de vijftiende eeuw tot 1940* (Amsterdam 1999) 237-75.



63. A lot for a lottery of books, works of art and musical instruments held to raise money for the statue of Laurens Janszoon Coster that was erected in 1856. National Library, The Hague. Bakhuizen van den Brink Collection.

William I in 1813, the first scion of the house of Orange who could call himself king.¹⁴

William's policy was only ostensibly reactionary. It is true that he partly restored the old class system and seigniorial rights, but his policy was also aimed at expanding a number of achievements from the French period: unity in governance, legislation and the legal system, and universal taxation. When the journeyman printers thanked Adolph Blussé in the name of 'all the Netherlands' for his financial support of the Coster festival in 1823, they were referring to both the Northern and the Southern Netherlands, which were united in 1815 to become the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This did not put an end to the cult of the Fatherland. Quite the contrary, it is clear from the countless Fatherland festivals, competitions, poetic panegyrics and discourses on this topic, and the popularity of historical novels with a Fatherland theme, that the word had gained a new impetus—although the connotation had changed. The 'Fatherland' was no longer a 'distant Fatherland', an imaginary entity that would someday

¹⁴ See N.C.F. van Sas, 'De vaderlandse imperatief. Begripsverandering en politieke conjunctuur, 1763-1813' in N.C.F. van Sas (ed.), *Vaderland. Een geschiedenis vanaf de vijftiende eeuw tot 1940* (Amsterdam 1999) 275-309.

be achieved; rather, it was a deeply-felt conviction, a sentiment that one did not automatically possess but had to work hard in order to attain.¹⁵

This nineteenth-century nationalism was not a typically Dutch phenomenon. The German reaction to the Dutch commemorations of Coster is illustrative in this regard. Less than a year later, in the German city of Mainz, a memorial for Johannes Gutenberg was erected and preparations were begun for equally exuberant celebrations to mark the four hundred years—in 1836—since Gutenberg's invention of the printing press. The English, in turn, decided to honour William Caxton with a statue.¹⁶ And in the process of government formation that was taking place in the surrounding countries, with local and regional distinctions losing out in favour of national uniformity, there was also a need for a new binding force, a sense of national solidarity that would have to be implanted by means of instruments such as education and culture. The discovery—actually the rediscovery—of a great national past with its 'own' heroes, preferably ones with international allure such as Coster, Gutenberg and Caxton, made a fruitful contribution to this process. The fact that the inventors of the printing press were cultural heroes whose legacy expanded to assume mythological proportions—far more than national naval heroes or world explorers—will have had to do with the nature of their skills. As the inventors of the most important medium for instilling love of Fatherland, these men essentially embodied a double symbolism: 'the medium is the message'.

In the surrounding countries the cult of the genius blossomed in this period, but in the Netherlands during the first half of the nineteenth century there was only room for the geniuses of the distant past, such as Coster.¹⁷ The loss of the cosmopolitan energy that the Republic of the

¹⁵ According to the author and publisher Adriaan Loosjes, the rehabilitation of the 'small and so profoundly debased people' of the Netherlands would only be possible when 'the love for the fatherland burned fiercely in every heart' as it did in the heart of the hero of his historical novel *Het leven van Maurits Lijnslager* (The life of Maurice Lineslager) (Van den Berg, 'Verbeelding van het vaderland', 311).

¹⁶ Hellinga and De Wolf, *Laurens Janszoon Coster was zijn naam*, 114. For the Coster celebrations in 1856 see M. Cornelissen, "'O nageslacht van Coster, wat slaat ge uw voorvader in 't aangezicht!'" A.C. Kruseman en de Coster-feesten van 1856' in W. van den Berg (ed.), *Haarlemse kringen. Vijftien verkenningen naar het literair-culturele leven in een negentiende-eeuwse stad* (Hilversum 1993) 129-39.

¹⁷ The Coster legend died out as history gradually became a more scholarly discipline in the second half of the nineteenth century. In around 1870 people 'spoke not so much of a Coster legend as of a Coster scandal, and with deep indignation' (P.B.M. Blaas, 'Het karakter van het vaderland. Vaderlandse geschiedenis tussen Wagenaar en Fruin, 1780-1840' in N.C.F. van Sas [ed.], *Vaderland. Een geschiedenis van de vijftiende eeuw tot 1940* [Amsterdam 1999] 365-91, 380).

United Netherlands had exuded in the 'Golden' seventeenth century, when it had served as a sanctuary for persecuted foreign intellectuals and boasted an internationally-oriented book trade (still interpreted as a 'Fatherland in decline' in the eighteenth century), was transformed into an achievement within the new setting of nineteenth-century nationalism. By elevating the culture of mediocrity to a norm—a culture to which the Netherlands, on account of its small size, was condemned—the Dutch made a virtue of necessity. According to the recent, revised analysis by Gert-Jan Johannes, this was to prove the breeding ground for a Dutch *Sonderweg*:

The Enlightenment ideal of the free, liberally-educated individual who, together with others, was able to fully accept his responsibility as a member of society—as 'human being, as citizen and as Christian'—now came to be seen more and more as a typically Dutch invention. The maintenance and advancement of a 'general popular culture' was no longer an unquestioned enlightened pursuit in the universal sense. It had become a polemical means by which the Dutch Enlightenment was intent on distinguishing itself from the new cult of the genius to be found elsewhere.¹⁸

In other words, the true Dutch citizen was impelled not so much by the pursuit of the highest culture as by the pursuit of a broadening of culture. This laid the foundations for the profound concern for education and cultural formation that, until quite recently, characterised the Netherlands ('*Nederland als kennisland*'—the Netherlands as the land of knowledge). But it also led to the fervent Dutch tendency, still evident today, to prize uniform mediocrity above individual excellence, and to punish the exceptional.

The preoccupation with education also explains why an organization such as the *Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen* (the Society for Public Advancement)—popularly known as 'Het Nut'—had so great an influence in comparison with similar groups in other countries.¹⁹ This private organization, whose membership grew from 3,700 in 1800 to 13,792 in 1850,²⁰ launched initiatives in the field of public education and popular enlighten-

¹⁸ G.J. Johannes, *De lof der aalbessen. Over (Noord-) Nederlandse literatuur en de consequenties van kleinschaligheid 1770-1830* (The Hague 1997) [= *Nederlandse cultuur in Europees context* 10], 73. See the poem written by the Dutch H.A. Spandaw in 1810, *Lof der aalbessen*, a kind of 'in praise of small Dutch things' glorifying in many stanzas the tiny red currant in favour of the peach or apricot, fruits of foreign lands.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

²⁰ Lenders, *De burger en de volksschool*, 34. See also W. Los, 'Huiselijke versus publieke opvoeding: de vorming van vaderlandslievende burgers en de Revolutie in de Nederlanden', *De achttiende eeuw* 28 (1996) 119-31.

ment that became a model for the sweeping educational reforms implemented by the government from 1801 on. These changes involved setting up standardised schools that offered everyone public education, with the government exercising active control to guarantee quality. One of the ways that this was achieved was by employing school inspectors, Abraham Blussé Jr being among their ranks.²¹

When it came to educational reform, the shining example of Het Nut did have more negative implications for the lower classes than before, when it was able to operate solely on a charitable basis. Now these classes were treated like a pack of potentially dangerous, uncivilised savages. But it had a highly beneficial side as well. Because the government could tap the expertise of the Het Nut in the realm of dissemination of knowledge and cultural formation, public education was able to develop with great speed into an institution whose educational standards were higher than those in a number of private schools still being attended by the upper classes.²² At the same time, the paragons of virtue who were held up as examples in the public elementary schools were not reserved for lower-class children alone. In the educational environment in which Otto van Eck and the Blussé children grew up, these excessively virtuous models were disguised as little Grandisson or the dutiful thread-spinner Jacob van Hespel. The child-centred approach of the Nut schools, where the only instrument of punishment the children had to fear was a difficult book, was another aspect of Het Nut's legacy.

Like the parents of Otto van Eck, who were members from 1796 on, and those of Adolph and Abraham Blussé, who joined in 1800, the other members of Het Nut were very open to the ideas propagated by enlightened educators such as Campe or Salzmann, who called for phased curricula, teaching with visual aids and a balanced development of the child's moral, intellectual and physical capacities in a healthy and friendly school environment where corporal punishment was absolutely forbidden.²³ Despite the marked class differences between Otto van Eck, the Blussé children and the children from the 'indigent' classes who attended Het Nut's model schools, all their schooling had one essential element in common: the formation of a 'virtuous heart' by means of worthy models who were recruited from literature—such as the industrious German peasant Sebastian

²¹ Lenders, *De burger en de volksschool*, 20.

²² *Ibid.*, 13, 32-38, 46-47.

²³ *Ibid.*, 35, 139.

Kluge²⁴—or from the immediate vicinity, such as the hard-working Jacob van Hespel or the thrifty journeyman printer Jacobus Blom, whom Abraham Blussé Jr processed into children's literature. This democratic virtuousness, which could be acquired by every citizen, rich or poor, and was the essential characteristic by which the value of an individual could be assessed, broke through the class system and perpetuated it at the same time. It was only because of his virtuous living that Jacob van Hespel was held up as a model to be emulated. The young Abraham Blussé was certainly not expected to consider a career as a loyal, poorly-paid thread-spinner. Nor was it hoped that Otto van Eck, inspired by Salzmann's story of Kluge the overzealous farm worker, would be filled with a burning passion to lead such a life himself.²⁵ Not even if he were to begin by owning a farm, as his diary implies: a farm is 'all that I long for'.²⁶

We see the same 'unity in diversity' in the way the Dordrecht printers' festival of 1823 was organised. The entire local population was involved, regardless of class, and the focus of the event—the power of the printing press—was equally venerated by all. Within these limits, however, everyone knew his place: the journeymen printers (grateful to be able to play a masked role in the celebrations) were confined to the workshop next to the residence, while the orchestra of gentlemen amateurs (who had been kind enough to contribute to the festivities) were received in Adolph Blussé's home.

The ideology that was professed by Het Nut and had a wide following beyond it—virtue through an increase of knowledge—was not only audible in the lyrics of the songs that were written by local enthusiasts and printed and sung by the journeymen printers on their carts. The message was also spread by scattering the lyrics, accessible to everyone, among the crowds that lined the streets:

Before the ploughman's day is done—Hurrah!
 He reads the news by the setting sun—Hurrah!
 O what a happy man is he,
 The Dordrecht newspaper on his knee!
 Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!

Young lads know every single tale—Hurrah!
 From Noah's ark to Jonah's whale—Hurrah!
 And even the silly kitchen wench

²⁴ See Baggerman, 'Lezen tot de laatste snik', 76.

²⁵ Ibid., 77.

²⁶ Baggerman and Dekker, *Dagboek van Otto van Eck*, 111.

Knows for sure that Paris is French!
Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!

Yes, reading is a great success—Hurrah!
Since LAURENS invented the printing press—Hurrah!
And soon the common vendor's wife,
Will speak four languages, maybe five!
Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!²⁷

The means by which the vendor's wife will acquire her five languages is explained in another song:

Printing a dictionary
Is tiresome after a while,
Just keep yourself bright and merry
And finish the job in style.²⁸

Only those who have yet to acquire reading skills are excluded from sharing in the achievements offered by the printing press, as this fourteen-year-old printer's apprentice attests:²⁹

If you can't read or write
You're really very dumb;
But if you want to learn
It won't cost you a crumb!³⁰

If we are to judge from the next verse, sung at least with great fervour if not from total conviction, the reading revolution must have been completed by about 1823:

The man who once six books possessed,
Was much, much richer than the rest.
But those who call that rich today,
Are more than fools in every way.³¹

Which brings us back to the question with which our research began.

The theory of the reading revolution came to the Netherlands partly from Germany but was also fed by contemporary observations from inhabitants of the Dutch Republic. If we listen carefully to these contemporaries, we hear the hum of enormous activity in the book market. We have seen

²⁷ J.P.D.J. [= Jan Pluim de Jaager], 'Het vierde eeuwfeest der drukkunst' in *Vrolijke liederen*.

²⁸ J.P.D.J. [= Jan Pluim de Jaager], 'Aan de drukkunst' in *Vrolijke liederen*.

²⁹ 'Listen to a printer's apprentice who is not yet fifteen years old.'

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ J.P.D.J., 'De rijdende drukpers', in *Vrolijke liederen*.

how the journalist Pieter van Woensel, the author-translator Betje Wolff and the bookseller-writer Arend Fokke felt so overwhelmed by the flood of new titles that they dreamed of a future world in which only a select number of books would be published, formulated as succinctly as possible and made accessible by means of registers.³² A similar tendency was observed in the spectatorial periodical *De Koopman* (The merchant), whose editor was critical of the imagined flood of small, profit-loving booksellers and the consequent stream of 'rubbish and libellous writing' being produced by 'salaried fame-hunters'.³³ The stream of libellous writing mentioned in *De Koopman* was probably a reference to the countless political pamphlets that were appearing at the time, a tendency which indeed has been confirmed by empirical research but which formed a temporary eruption in the book market in connection with political disturbances during the Patriot period.³⁴ Interestingly, *De Koopman* had already drawn attention to this phenomenon in the first half of the 1770s, although the increase was not discernible until the 1780s.

A far deeper chasm was yawning between the observation that it was raining 'rubbish' and the actual situation—at least if we interpret the observed boom in rubbish noted in *De Koopman* as an increase in romantic fiction, the genre that plays such an important role in other contemporary observations of the so-called 'reading mania'. Judging by recent empirical research, eighteenth-century Dutch readers were not so much overcome by the urge to escape the realities of daily life as by the desire to improve that reality. The customers of Tijl's bookshop in Zwolle during the years 1777 to 1787 as well as those of Van Benthem's bookshop in Middelburg in around 1808 showed only a scant interest in novels. Their overwhelming preference was for functional reading-matter: professional literature, schoolbooks, law books and book on religious practice such as the Psalms, hymns and collections of sermons.³⁵ We see the same practical interest reflected in De Kruif's list of the top ten most-read books, compiled on the basis of book ownership in eighteenth-century property inventories made by residents of The Hague. These lists contain not a single novel, but they

³² See Chapter Four.

³³ See Chapter Two.

³⁴ Brouwer observes a 'gradual increase in the proportion of political writing' at Tijl's bookshop in Zwolle from 1777 onwards (Brouwer, *Lezen en schrijven in de provincie*, 78). See also Van Sas, 'Opiniepers en politieke cultuur' 97-131, 111-12 and Johannes, *De barometer van de smaak*, 169-72.

³⁵ Mijnhardt and Kloek, *Leescultuur in Middelburg*, 59-61; Brouwer, *Lezen en schrijven in de provincie*, 188-198.

do include almanacs, atlases, newspapers and notarial and legal handbooks.³⁶ We have also established that the Blussé list offers a similar picture. We can only determine how representative the Blussé list was, however, once we have constructed a total list of titles available in the eighteenth century. Far more revealing in this regard is the difference in print-run figures between the general literature and the practical literature produced by Blussé.³⁷ The average print-run figures for practical titles were twice as high as those for works of a general nature. In all these studies there is a slight tendency in favour of the novel. Even in the profoundly respectable Blussé list there is a discernible increase in this genre—after 1810. It would be a very long time, however, before the reading mania as imagined by people of the time began to manifest itself in any concrete form. Nor was there an observable reading mania in a more general sense, despite the preference among booksellers for, say, more practical literature. In connection with his research into booksellers in Zwolle, Brouwer—who established that there had been an increase in the reading public there of from two to four percent—argues that we cannot properly speak of a reading revolution until after 1850. He also places the explosive increase in the production of handbooks in the mid-nineteenth century.³⁸ In the 1780s only about ten handbooks and instruction manuals were sold at Tijl's bookshop in Zwolle, whereas by around 1850 that number 'could scarcely be counted; not only does every profession have its own handbook or instruction manual, but so do many forms of leisure activity, and with one or more trade journals to boot'.³⁹ The increase in handbooks began considerably earlier, however, as can be seen from Blussé's lists.

So why all the fuss? It might be a good idea to take another look at the city of Dordrecht on that 10th of July 1823 and listen carefully to the words sung by the journeymen printers: 'The Dordrecht newspaper on his knee!—Hurrah!' and 'And even the silly kitchen wench / Knows for sure that Paris

³⁶ De Kruij, *Liefhebbers en gewoontelezers*, 198.

³⁷ For a further exploration of this distinction see Brouwer, *Lezen en schrijven in de provincie*, 225–26.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 267.

³⁹ *Ibid.* This development is not exclusively a Dutch one; it can also be seen in surrounding countries. Thus D. Vincent observes that at about the same period in England 'a trickle of guides to various trades broadened into a flood of publications by 1850'. Roy Porter and Lesley Hall analysed the rise of another, less commercial type of manual: convenient small books containing sexual information and advice, a development evidently encouraged by the growing market for 'educational handbooks and works of self-culture, self-improvement and advice' (R. Porter and L. Hall [eds.], *The facts of life. The creation of sexual knowledge in Britain 1650–1950* [New Haven 1995] 35).

is French! Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!' Is this a song about people who are glued to their novels? Certainly not! The farmer reads the local Dordrecht paper, the young lad has been delving into religious literature, the 'kitchen wench' manages to take a little geography on board and the vendor's wife tries to expand her knowledge of languages by using dictionaries.

The songs are only partly about the contemporary situation. The view of the future is at least as important: 'And soon the common vendor's wife / Will speak four languages, maybe five!' The journal *De Koopman*, with its complaints about the torrent of pamphlets and the explosion of pulp culture on the eve of the battle of the broadsheets and well before the increase in the production of novels, amply anticipates the future. Likewise, the journeymen printers sing of a generally accepted time to come that casts its shadow far ahead, a shadow that apparently is already visible to contemporaries. It was no coincidence that at the festival in honour of Coster in 1823 it was the printers—the embodiment and the popularisers of the message of Het Nut: universal culture through literacy—who were mobilised as a choir with a utopian message.

Seen through the eyes of the established elite and the upper middle classes, from whose ranks Het Nut recruited its members, the journeymen printers also embodied the flip side of popular enlightenment. The first national Dutch trade union was the printers' union, established in Amsterdam in 1866. They were not the first because their working conditions were so much worse than those of other groups of workers (in fact they were better), but because they were literate and hence more articulate. Like the diamond workers, who formed a trade union shortly after them, they were among the more well-educated and better-paid upper ranks of labourers.⁴⁰ The potential danger of popular enlightenment through the dissemination of reading matter, an ideal advocated by the ruling classes themselves, is the threat that the socially engineered man might turn into a monster of Frankenstein. This is one of the roots of the persistent debate on the reading mania. This fear of the potential power of the printing press was fed not only by anxiety about the ultimate implications of Nut ideology. The succession of social uprisings that mark the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in which the printing press played a significant role, will have caused respect for the influence of this medium to grow considerably.

The same ambivalent attitude will also have contributed to the enlightened theories about reading that the ruling class applied to their own chil-

⁴⁰ Brugmans, *Paardenkracht en mensenmacht*, 281.



64. Analysis of the capacities of two reading children in Lavater's *Over de physiognomie*.
National Library, The Hague.

dren—children from the elite and the upper middle class such as Otto van Eck and the Blussé boys. These children were served a broad range of reading matter consisting largely of enlightened works in which the new genre of the children's book—both fiction and non-fiction written especially for children—was assigned an adult position. In contrast to what the theory of the reading revolution suggests, however, parents did not relate to the new genre as a way of extending their children's reading horizons. Indeed, parents had the tendency to control and direct their children's reading habits from A to Z, as the educational manuals of the day advised, so the approach to reading acquired an 'old-fashioned' intensity. Parents and

children would read together, and therefore aloud. If a child did read alone it was with pen in hand to make notes about what he was reading. The notes would then be re-read by the child (and then by the parents, and sometimes even by the family's circle of acquaintances).⁴¹ And as we observed with the Blussé boys, the combination of 'recreational' reading and foreign language study—which resulted in the translation of fragment after fragment of reading matter—guaranteed reading habits that were more intensive than extensive.⁴²

The debate in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries concerning 'the' reading mania has been compared with the discussions that erupted in the 1950s when the television was introduced. The commotion over the presumed negative influence of this medium, at a time when there was still only one channel available and programmes were broadcast for one hour a day, was quite out of proportion to TV's actual influence. Now we have round-the-clock broadcasting and a motley assortment of channels with plenty of sex, violence and soaps, but suspiciously little discussion about the influence of this information mix on the minds of the 'innocent' child. Similarly, the introduction of the rotary printing press in the second half of the nineteenth century would occur with barely a murmur despite all the excitement engendered by the perceived reading mania fifty years before.⁴³ But aside from these parallels there is one crucial difference: the medium of television was indeed a novelty when its influence was being debated. This certainly cannot be said of the printing press, which in 1823 was already four hundred years old—hence the reason for the festivities. No significant innovations in printing technology have been demonstrated during this period either, nor was there an actual massive expansion of the reading public that might explain the ferocity of the debate over reading mania.

It was not the observed reality but the power of the printing press that led to the debate about reading mania. People became aware of this power thanks to *Het Nut* and its ideal of universal literacy, and the associated ideology of a socially engineered society inhabited by socially engineered

⁴¹ For greater detail see Baggerman, 'Lezen tot de laatste snik', 57–88.

⁴² The same combination can be found in the upbringing of Otto van Eck: Baggerman, 'Lezen tot de laatste snik', 71.

⁴³ J.J. Kloek recently pointed out this temporal difference between perceived events and the actual reality in 'Reconsidering the reading revolution: the thesis of the "reading revolution" and a Dutch bookseller's clientele around 1800', *Poetics* 26 (1999) 289–307, 304–305. I am indebted to J.J. Kloek for allowing me to read his article before publication.

people (in the positive as well as the negative sense). This created a sense of unease whereby people became convinced that book readers could be found in every nook and cranny of society—not leafing through dictionaries or studying trade manuals, which would have been more accurate, but absorbed in novels. And the novel was precisely the genre whose reception was most difficult to pre-program. Pieter Blussé's identification with the exemplary hero of *De geschiedenis van Justus*, the novel he read with such concentration during the period of his engagement and interpreted as an appeal for a marriage that transcends social class, is a case in point.⁴⁴ Even if the alleged amorphous masses had not overindulged in novels like *Glorioso of de grote duivel* (Glorioso or the great devil)—the book for which Woutertje Pieterse bargained away his New Testament with hymns⁴⁵—but had been content with edifying novels, such reading matter could have provoked unforeseen conclusions and identifications if it were not properly supervised by parents or the clergymen and teachers who led the reading societies. The fear that the youth of the Netherlands would commit mass suicide due to the absence of a clear moral message in *Het lijden van de jonge Werther*⁴⁶ is illustrative of the mood of the time.⁴⁷ This fear of the novel's influence can also be seen in the adolescent reader Alexander van Goltstein, who could not resist the temptation to read novels despite his repeated good resolutions. With great contrition he listed his excesses in his diary. He confesses not only to have given in to masturbation again, but to top it all off, 'urged by the proclivity to be constantly entertained ... [I] bought some books, just as I had last week at [Wolff-]Bekker and Deken'.⁴⁸ Alexander van Goltstein's judgment of his own reading habits would have been far less negative had he limited himself to the reading of novels. But he also read journals and newspapers like the *Schiedamsche Courant*, where he came across 'an essay about excessive reading in which the harmful nature of this habit was clearly set forth'.⁴⁹ And who could have been more

⁴⁴ See Chapter One.

⁴⁵ The story of Woutertje Pieterse is a semi-autobiographical novel written by the famous Dutch writer Eduard Douwes Dekker (Multatuli) published in *Multatuli*, Ideeën I (Amsterdam 1879).

⁴⁶ Dutch translation of Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (1787).

⁴⁷ Kloek, *Over Werther geschreven*, 101. Compare the reaction of Magdalena van Schinne to an imitation of Werther: 'I find his vanity extremely amusing; he doesn't make any bones about it. But unfortunately for him or for us, I don't have the patience to finish reading the book'. (R. Dekker and A. Dik (eds.), *Le journal de Magdalena van Schinne* (1786-1795) (Paris 1994) 99.

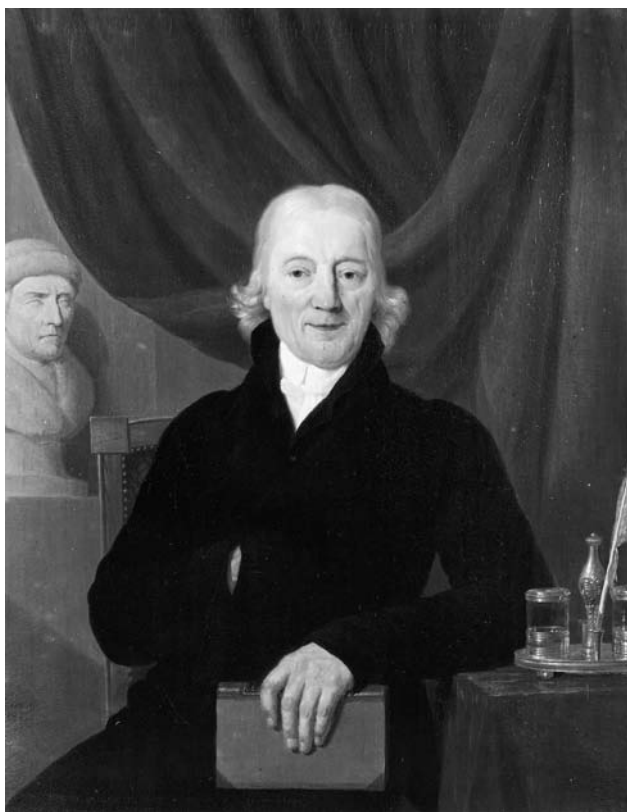
⁴⁸ Dekker, *Childhood*, 87.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

aware of the deceptive flights of fancy arising from the reading of novels than those who took part in the debate on the reading mania? Even if the extent of their involvement was that of translator or reviewer—as opposed to the ‘masses of people’ who were suspected of novel-addiction—they must have been active consumers of this genre themselves.

The reception of even a scholarly work must be kept within reasonable bounds, and to that end a clear moral message is in order. Twenty-first-century researchers who, calculator in hand, mount a pursuit of an eighteenth-century reading revolution that supposedly was marked by a ‘rise of the novel’, have been misled by their own fixations (after all, our own reading culture is dominated by the novel) as well as by the panic-stricken noises from readers and writers educated in the eighteenth century. Although the preoccupations of eighteenth-century participants in the debate on reading mania and those of twenty-first-century researchers are grounded in different contexts, they lead to the same concentration of focus, with the concomitant blind spot: the production, distribution and reception of novels, one of the new genres, as touchstone for a reading revolution. All went well until—almost willy-nilly—the empirical research was confronted with readers clutching dog-eared church books, dictionaries, school books, law books and other far less imaginative literature. What are we to do with such people? And what are we to make of a printer-publisher like Pieter Blussé, who published all sorts of things but preferably not novels? Pieter even prided himself as a publisher of practical books, and he manipulated the reception of his own entry in biographical dictionaries to advance this reputation. It was the object of this pride that was extolled at the Coster festival of 1823: not novels but functional literature: newspapers, dictionaries, atlases and religious works.

For Blussé it was no disgrace to project himself as a publisher of practical literature, certainly not against the backdrop of the debate on the reading mania and the Nut ideology propagating a wide dissemination of knowledge. His publications, with the *Volledige beschrijving van alle ambachten* (Complete Description of all Trades and Occupations) as the crown jewel of his list, contributed to the reputation of his publishing house and to him personally—or, as his biographer Van der Aa put it: ‘many a well-produced and useful piece of printed matter has, under this man’s name, spread the fame of his native city throughout this land and even beyond’. Reason enough to associate him with the fame of Coster, not only during the Coster commemoration but even earlier, by naming the bookshop after this inventor and by having his portrait painted with a bust of



65. Portrait painted by G.A. Schmidt of Pieter Blussé Sr (1748-1823), with a book, writing implements and a bust of Laurens Janszoon Coster in the background, oil on canvas. Museum Mr. Simon van Gijn Dordrecht.

Coster in the background. It was Coster, after all, whose invention had put the Netherlands on the map and brought enlightenment to the world.

But which man are we talking about? For Van der Aa it is Abraham Blussé Sr, the founder of the family firm. The portrait with Coster in the background shows Pieter Blussé Sr, who died in 1823 shortly before the Coster festival, leaving the printer Adolph, the book dealer Pieter Jr and the publisher Abraham Jr to bask in Coster's reflected glory. A. Blussé & Son represents a family identity of successive generations, to which the family archive was to make a contribution from generation to generation. Such an archive is in essence a collection of *lieux de mémoire* from which some memories have been carefully removed and others magnified by additional burdens of proof in the autobiographical comments. Such an ar-

chive, as was argued in the introduction, is a treacherous morass for the researcher and almost inevitably leads to a broad, personal, biographical approach. As a reluctant ghost-writer, what can you do with such a publisher than present him with the bill? That is what Jan Pluim de Jaager did, the master of ceremonies at the Coster festival who, as an author, was responsible for most of the song lyrics. He presented the bill to Blussé for the costs of the printers' party and added a brief impatient note. In it he urged Blussé to hurry up and tell him how much he wanted to pay for the statue of Coster—which had been made by the journeymen of the rival printer. '*Amice!* I seem to remember that you agreed to take the sassinet [plaster statue] for a certain sum. ... I beg you to name a price. Then we can be finished with each other.'⁵⁰

⁵⁰ GAD, BFA, unsorted, box 43. The bill and the letter are dated 1 March 1824.

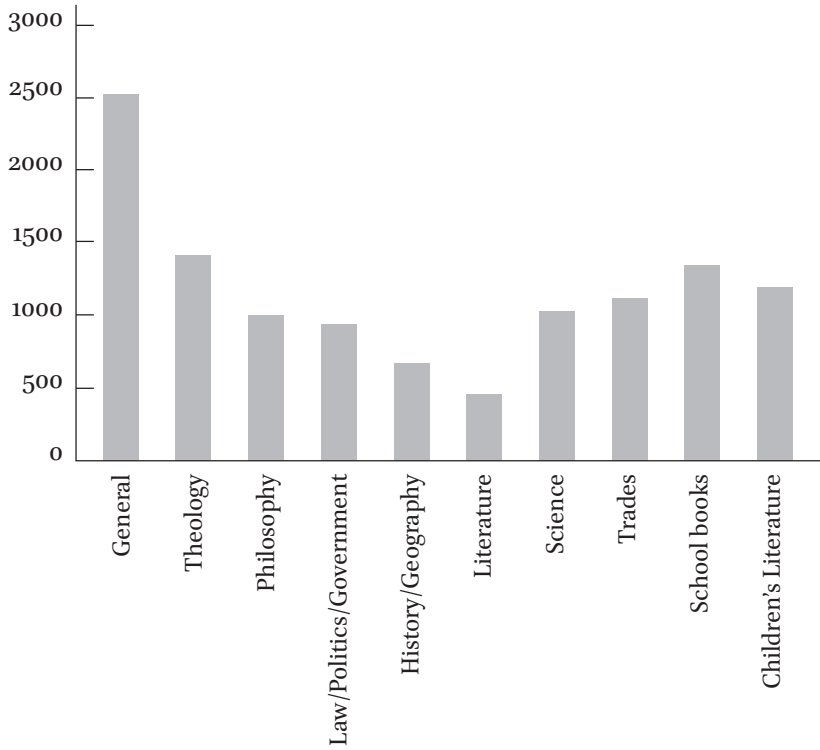
APPENDIX I

PUBLISHER'S LIST A. BLUSSÉ, PERCENTAGE/PERIOD

	1745-1770	1771-1806	1807-1830
General	1	3	8
Theology	42	24	18
Philosophy	4	1	1
Law/Politics/Government	3	13	11
History/Geography	16	16	19
Literature	11	11	10
Science	5	8	5
Trades	1	6	2
School books	1	5	17
Children's Literature	6	7	7
Other	10	6	2

APPENDIX II

AVERAGE PRINT RUNS PER GENRE, 1797-1818



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